

King visits Al Bashir Hospital

AMMAN (J.T.) — His Majesty King Abdullah paid a visit on Sunday night to Al Bashir Hospital, where he inquired about the services offered to patients, Jordan Television reported. King Abdullah inspected the emergency unit and the pharmacy and was assured on the services provided. The King also listened to the patients' requests and comments on the hospital's capacity. Accompanying the King was Royal Court Chief Abdul Karim Kabariti.

Jordan Times

An independent Arab political daily published by the Jordan Press Foundation
جورديان تايمز يومية سياسية مستقلة عن المؤسسة الصحفية الأردنية «الراي»

Israel to close West Bank, Gaza borders for anniversary

TEL AVIV (AFP) — Israel will seal off the West Bank and Gaza Strip during this week's celebrations marking the 51st anniversary of the Jewish state's creation, a military spokesman said Sunday. The army will close the borders from Monday evening until dawn Thursday, the spokesman said, noting that it was an annual security procedure but refusing to say if Israel had received word of planned disturbances. The border closure will prevent some 60,000 Palestinians from getting to their legal jobs in Israel. According to Palestinian figures, even a partial border closing costs Palestinian workers about \$2 million daily.

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Monarch returns from Libya

King to visit Syria on Wednesday for talks with President Assad

AMMAN (J.T.) — His Majesty King Abdullah is due to visit Syria on Wednesday for talks with President Hafez Assad on bilateral relations and issues of mutual concern, a senior official said on Sunday.

"King Abdullah will visit Syria on Wednesday as part of his Arab tour that has taken him so far to Saudi Arabia, Oman, the United Arab Emirates and Libya," the official told the Jordan Times.

The King, who returned from Libya yesterday, told Jordan Television that he "will go to Syria in two days' time, and the visit is bound to open a new chapter in Jordanian-Syrian relations."

Responding to a question about his meeting with Palestinian President Yasser Arafat during his Libyan visit and whether there were any new developments on the declaration of an independent Palestinian state, the King said: "The situation obviously for Abu Ammar [Arafat] is a very difficult one, and our job is to support the Palestinian people, and we will help our brothers through this very difficult period. Again, we will keep our fingers crossed that the future will bring [this region] the stability that the late King Hussein has always wished for."

In a recent interview with the Saudi daily Okaz, King



His Majesty King Abdullah is greeted by HRH Prince Mohammad upon his return from Libya (Petra photo)

Abdullah said: "Relations with our brothers in Syria and Kuwait are good and are developing for the better."

Speaking to the London-based Al Quds Al Arabi earlier this month, King Abdullah expressed his admiration for Bashar Assad, son and heir

apparent of President Assad, saying that when he visited Amman, he spoke about his vision for the future of Syria.

"Bashar Assad expressed his views about political changes in and modernisation of his country to meet current developments throughout the

world," King Abdullah said.

King Abdullah, who was accompanied on the visit to Libya by HRH Crown Prince Hamzah, Prime Minister Abdur-Ra'uf S. Rawabdeh, Royal Court Chief Abdul Karim Kabariti, HRH Prince Ghazi Ben Mohammad and

General Intelligence Department Director Samih Bataineh, said his visit to the North African country was in the course of Jordanian-Libyan consultations and coordination of Arab stands.

(Continued on page 2)

Euro-Med cultural series to be dedicated to King Hussein's memory

By Francesca Ciriaci

AMMAN — The Euro-Mediterranean conference recently held in Stuttgart concluded with the endorsement of a plan to dedicate a series of cultural activities to the memory of King Hussein, officials and diplomats said on Sunday.

The initiative, launched by Italy and entitled the "King Hussein Memorial Triptych," aims to keep alive the late Monarch's legacy of peace and mutual understanding by expanding the knowledge of the common roots of Europe and its partners, and promoting intercultural dialogue across the Mediterranean's shores.

The series is expected to feature three types of cultural activities: a music festival to strengthen understanding of the rich cultural heritage of the peoples in the Euro-Med region; studies, conferences and symposia on socio-cultural realities; and a theatre, literature, and traditional arts festival.

The project assumes a special significance as it is scheduled to be held in the year 2000, diplomats said, to symbolise the dawn of a new millennium of closeness, harmony, and mutual respect of the cultural diversity among Euro-Mediterranean societies, commemorating one of the greatest leaders of our time.

"We are very grateful to Italy and we were, of course, supportive of this initiative," said a member of the Jordanian delegation to the two-day Stuttgart conference, which ended on Friday.

Falling within the framework of the "cultural basket" of the

Euro-Med partnership process initiated at the 1995 Barcelona Conference, the "King Hussein Memorial Triptych" was endorsed in the final deliberations of the conference.

The foreign ministers of the 15 EU member states and their 12 Mediterranean partners also agreed at the Stuttgart conference to draft a regional document on peace and stability, international news agencies reported. It was the first concrete initiative under the "second basket" of the Barcelona process, dealing with political and security cooperation.

They set a late 2000 deadline to issue the "Euro-Med Charter for peace and stability," expected to include a long list of confidence-building measures.

The EU reaffirmed its intent to establish a free trade area across the Mediterranean by 2010 — the main aim of the "economic basket" of the Barcelona process, for which the EU has granted 4.7 billion euros (\$5 billion) in development aid to the Mediterranean region since 1995. A similar amount has been earmarked for 2000-2005, pending final EU approval.

Jordan, which signed an association agreement with the EU in 1997, received 136.2 million euros in loans, technical assistance, and donations to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency during that year. It also received an additional 176 million euros in loans, grants, technical assistance, and cultural programmes from individual EU member states. Total European aid in 1997 accounted for nearly five per cent of the Kingdom's gross domestic product.

James Moran, the head of the European Commission Delegation in Amman, told the Jordan Times in an interview last week that EU economic and financial support is meant to complement U.S. political initiatives to revive the Middle East peace process.

Last month, EU leaders issued the West's strongest support yet for Palestinian statehood, giving Israel one year to fulfil the "continuing and unqualified Palestinian right to self-determination."

Moran commented that consensus among the 15 member states vis-a-vis the peace process was total. "It is the best example of consensus in [any bloc's] foreign policy," he said.

He also stressed the participation at the Stuttgart conference of Libya, invited as an observer for the first time to a meeting of European foreign ministers.

A U.N. and European air and arms embargo imposed in 1992 was suspended two weeks ago, following the handover by Tripoli of two suspects in the 1988 explosion of a Pan Am flight over Lockerbie, Scotland, in which around 270 people died.

"There is a long and rich relationship through the centuries between Europe and Libya. It is a natural partnership," Moran said, adding: "Maybe it is too early to talk about an opening, but clearly there is a change in the atmosphere [of Euro-Libyan relations]."

The Stuttgart meeting concluded that Libya should enter the Euro-Med partnership once sanctions are completely lifted and Tripoli accepts European principles on human rights.

Ecevit takes lead in Turkish legislative elections

Agencies

PRIME MINISTER Bulent Ecevit's Democratic Left Party (DSP) was leading Turkish legislative elections Sunday, with the ultra-nationalists trailing behind, according to first partial results broadcast by Turkish television.

According to the results taking into account 2.5 million votes out of a possible 37.5 million voters, Ecevit has snatched 23.2 per cent as opposed to his 14.6 per cent in the 1995 election.

The ultra-right Nationalist Movement Party (MHP), which failed to make it into parliament in 1995, was second with 17.9 per cent.

They were followed by the pro-religious Virtue Party (Fazilet) which received 15.5 per cent.

The two main coopers-

ative parties, the Motherland Party (ANAP) of former Prime Minister Mesut Yilmaz and True Path Party (DYP) of Tansu Ciller, were following with 14.9 and 11.8 per cent respectively.

The socialist Republican People's Party (CHP) led by Deniz Baykal was lagging at 9.1 per cent, below the 10 per cent threshold that parties are required to pass for representation in parliament.

If these partial results are confirmed, it would signal a great change in the Turkish political scene with two parties from different ends of the political spectrum, but both promoting nationalist policies, cashing in on the capture of Kurdish rebel leader Abdullah Ocalan in February.

The MHP, known as the "Grey Wolves" with sub-

stantial support among the Turkish security forces, has been absent from the parliament since 1977.

Observers had previously said the party would manage to lure a considerable amount of support through its campaign based on the "unity of Turkey" against the Kurdish Labour Party's (PKK) 15-year armed struggle for Kurdish self-rule.

Ecevit, meanwhile, made headlines across the world as the head of a government that captured Turkey's number one enemy, Ocalan, and brought him back to face a treason trial.

The pro-Kurdish People's Democracy Party (Hadepe), expected to do well in the mainly Kurdish-populated southeast, meanwhile, was estimated to have got 2.9 per cent of the votes.

In local elections, Virtue was leading in the race for the mayoralties of the capital Ankara and Istanbul, Turkey's biggest city with a population of over 10 million, while the DSP received the majority in the Aegean city of Izmir, according to the first results.

Ecevit, Turkey's fourth premier in as many years, offered himself at a final rally as guarantor of the stability needed to push through reforms and tackle conflict in the mainly Kurdish southeast.

The head of Virtue, the biggest group in the old parliament, which faces a possible constitutional court ban later this year, vowed loyalty to the country's secularist constitution.

Virtue is not the only prominent party contesting

these elections that risks a ban before the year is out. The chief public prosecutor has also applied to outlaw Hadepe, which enjoys support in the troubled southeast.

While Virtue is accused of plotting an Islamic order on Turkish soil, Hadepe stands charged with supporting Ocalan, captured in Kenya two months ago, shortly after Ecevit took office.

Aydin Arslan, governor of 11 provinces under emergency rule, said after casting his vote that 100,000 members of the security forces stood ready, but there had been no violence.

"We will continue to take all precautions to ensure the polls reflect the free will of the people," he told reporters.

Settlement population growth similar under both Likud, Labour

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (AFP) — Despite worldwide criticism of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's policy of expanding Jewish settlements, the settler population has not grown significantly faster under his rule than under the previous Labour government, official figures showed Sunday.

According to census data released by the state Central Bureau of Statistics, 172,000 Jews lived in settlements in the West Bank and Gaza Strip at the end of 1998.

The figure represents a seven

per cent increase of the settler population during the year, roughly the same rate of increase registered in 1994 and 1995, the last full years when the dovish Labour Party was in power under the late Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin.

When the Rabin government arrived in power in 1992, it announced a partial freeze in settlement growth in order to facilitate peace efforts which resulted in the 1993 Oslo agreement on Palestinian autonomy.

But Rabin continued expanding major settlement blocks near Jerusalem and along the

"green line" separating the West Bank from Israel.

Netanyahu's rightist government won election in mid-1996 vowing to intensify building in all settlements, including deep inside the West Bank and in the Gaza Strip.

His government has since added thousands of new settlement units in these settlements, prompting angry protests from the Palestinians and increasingly harsh criticism from the international community, including the United States.

(Continued on page 2)

Yugoslavia breaks diplomatic relations with Albania, NATO strikes intensify

Solana, Blair say ground force option under review; refinery strike creates oil spill on Danube

Agencies

YUGOSLAVIA SEVERED diplomatic relations with neighbouring Albania on Sunday, accusing it of siding with NATO, as the alliance said its bombing campaign had broken the back of the Yugoslav air defence system.

Albania dismissed the Yugoslav move as unacceptable and vowed to continue supporting NATO against what it branded a "criminal regime" carrying out a policy of genocide against ethnic Albanians in Serbia's Kosovo province.

As ethnic Albanians continued to flee what NATO calls atrocities and ethnic cleansing, Western diplomats cited a report that scores of refugees had been killed by Yugoslav army shelling in central Kosovo.

A Skopje-based diplomat said the report had come from a rebel Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) commander

inside Kosovo who had provided reliable information in the past.

"As we understand it there are tens of thousands of civilians on the high ground stretching east from Lapusnik and Orlate. The commander said as many as 100 people, including some children have been killed. They're sitting ducks up there."

NATO Brigadier General Giuseppe Marani said he had photographic evidence of 43 mass graves in Kosovo. Ethnic Albanians in red-orange uniforms were being forced by Serbs to bury the corpses of their countrymen, he told a news conference.

NATO said Yugoslavia's air defences were now only ad hoc and makeshift. NATO spokesman Jamie Shea said that in one overnight raid 36 aircraft had destroyed 13 armoured vehicles in Kosovo and destroyed the Pancevo oil refinery near Belgrade.

"Yugoslav President Slo-

bovan] Milosevic no longer has the ability to refine crude today," Shea said.

A pall of black smoke hung over the Yugoslav capital after a night of attacks and a three-year-old girl was killed in a raid on Batujnica military airport to the north of the city, Studio B television reported.

A Serbian environment ministry official said the strike against the refinery had created an oil spill stretching for 15 to 20 km in the Danube River, which was moving towards the Black Sea.

Undeterred by a bloody incident last Wednesday in which a column of refugees was allegedly bombed by NATO planes, the alliance also pressed ahead with air strikes on transport and communication infrastructure in an attempt to isolate Milosevic's 40,000 troops and 300 tanks in Kosovo.

On the 25th night of the air war, targets included refiner-

ies and chemical plants in Belgrade and Novi Sad, the site of a military airport near the capital and the main highway from Belgrade to the Montenegrin capital Podgorica, according to Serb media. The official news agency Tanjug said eight people were injured in Novi Sad.

NATO officials said the bombing hit two MiG-21 fighter jets on the ground and struck supply lines. Serbian media said they also struck several bridges, including one near the southern Serbian town of Raska that serves as a major rail link to Kosovo.

The alliance's jets flew more than 500 missions in the 24-hour period ending Sunday afternoon. NATO said it was the highest daily total yet. NATO pilots struck sites across Serbia and Kosovo, where they reported seeing smoke from burning villages.

(Continued on page 2)



Smoke from Pancevo's chemical plant looms on Sunday over Belgrade after NATO air strikes on the town (Reuters photo)

Anguished Lebanese mark Israeli refugee camp attack

BEIRUT (R) — Lebanon on Sunday mourned the grisly death of more than 100 refugees during a 1996 Israeli blitz that still ignites hatred for the Jewish state.

Hundreds of political, community and student leaders staged nationwide ceremonies to commemorate the third anniversary of the April 18 Israeli attack on a south Lebanon U.N. camp which was sheltering more than 100 men, women and children.

It was the bloodiest incident in the 17-day "Grapes of Wrath" military offensive aimed at crushing Hizbollah guerrillas fighting to end Israel's 21-year-old occupation of the south.

At Qana, the village indelibly scarred by the massacre, political party members and public figures gave emotional speeches of condolences that also called for vengeance

against "the enemy Israel." The ceremony was broadcast live on television.

"There can be no peace with Israel, we must fight and fight," said a cleric from the Shiite Muslim Amal Party, pointing to a monument of plastic doves daubed in blood-red paint and impaled on a missile bearing the Israeli flag.

"We must tell our children that dying for the sake of the nation is not the end, but the start of eternal life. Resistance against the occupation is the only way," he told the crowd. Israel has controlled parts of the south since 1978. It carved out a so-called security strip 14 years ago to protect its borders from potential guerrilla attacks.

U.N. soldiers and relatives lingered at the Qana cemetery with its glass box tombstones filled with pictures, holy books and relics of the dead. Children scattered flowers on the

tombs while tears and sweat ran down the faces of distraught visitors looking at pictures of charred corpses and anguished rescuers.

Seventeen high-explosive shells pounded into the camp of the Fijian contingent of the U.N. peacekeepers in the south. Israel said that it had made a mistake but a U.N. investigation later concluded that the attack was probably not an accident.

Officials have turned the blackened remains of the camp into a shrine. A sign at the entrance reads "The Second Holocaust" and a tattered blanket, rusty cans and a congealed baby's pacifier remind visitors of what is considered one of the worst atrocities in years of Israeli incursions into Lebanon.

In Beirut, students met at a central park to sing patriotic

songs and recite poetry. Candles burned throughout the night in at least one main street and state television showed archival images of women and children, their flesh burned to the bone, dangling from the arms of their relatives.

The Qana anniversary follows Israel's occupation on Thursday of Amoun, a front-line village near the area where a Hizbollah bomb killed an Israeli soldier this month. The leading Al Nahar newspaper said Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu had seized Amoun to win May elections. "It seems that each Israeli poll has its own Qana," the daily said.

Former dovish Prime Minister Shimon Peres launched the 1996 operation a few weeks before an election which he lost after horrified Arab Israelis refused to vote for him.



PALESTINIAN PROTEST: Masked Palestinian activists give the 'V' sign during a rally held on Sunday in the West Bank town of Ramallah. The rally was held to mark the Palestinian prisoner day, a day in which prisoners held in Israeli jails are remembered (AP photo)

King to visit Syria on Wednesday

(Continued from page 1)

"We discussed many pan-Arab issues and regional questions, and our views were close," said the King.

"Our brothers in Libya have reaffirmed their stand in support of Jordan, and we will place our expertise and work-force at their disposal," said King Abdullah.

"I have asked the prime minister to follow-up on these questions, and we hope to have a quick answer from our brothers," the King added.

King Abdullah met with Libyan leader Muammar Qadhafi and exchanged views concerning regional and international issues as well as bilateral ties and future cooperation in water-related affairs, the

exchange of expertise, joint investment projects, and economic development questions.

During the visit King Abdullah also met jointly with Qadhafi and Arafat to discuss the Arab-Israeli peace process and the general situation in the Middle East.

In addition, the King met several African leaders who were also visiting Libya.

Upon departing from Tripoli, King Abdullah sent a cable to President Qadhafi expressing appreciation for the hospitality accorded to him and the Jordanian delegation and congratulating Qadhafi on the suspension of U.N. sanctions on his country.

King Abdullah said in his cable that the visit to Tripoli had offered him

an opportunity to exchange views on numerous issues of concern to Jordan and Libya.

"I was delighted to listen to your views and your keenness on bolstering relations between our two countries, particularly in the economic field, and your desire to end differences among the Arab states and help them face the common challenges," said the King.

Rawabdeh and Kabarti met with the Speaker of the Libyan National Assembly Zennat Muhammad Zenati for talks on cooperation in economic fields, joint Jordanian-Libyan projects and trade exchanges, as well as Arab and international issues of concern.

Iraqi anti-aircraft batteries fire on U.S. jets

BAGHDAD (AFP) — Iraq said its anti-aircraft defence batteries opened fire on U.S. warplanes in the "no-fly" zone over the south of the country on Sunday.

Ten enemy aircraft formations of F-14s and F-15s entered Iraqi air space at 0425 GMT from Kuwait and Saudi Arabia, an Iraqi military spokesman was quoted by the official INA news agency as saying.

The planes, which were accompanied by AWAC aircraft, carried out 20 sorties over the south of the country, the spokesman said.

"Our anti-aircraft defences resisted the planes forcing them to leave our air space and flee to their bases," at 0603 GMT, he added.

Both U.S. and British aircraft

enforce "no-fly" zones over southern and northern Iraq. Baghdad does not recognise the legitimacy of the zones, which are not covered by a specific U.N. resolution, and has vowed to oppose them.

The zones have been the scene of regular skirmishes between allied planes and Iraqi jets and air defences since the U.S.-British December air war, dubbed Operation Desert Fox.

On Saturday, four Iraqis were killed and a fifth injured in raids by U.S. warplanes in the north of the country.

The southern zone was established in August 1992 to prevent attacks on the Shiite Muslim population, while the northern zone was set up in April 1991 to protect the Kurdish population.

'Britain's proposal part of plot'

BAGHDAD (AFP) — Britain's proposal to the United Nations on future ties with Iraq is a front for a U.S. "plot" to perpetuate the embargo, an influential Baghdad newspaper said Tuesday.

"The United States wants to maintain the embargo in a round-about way, it has presented a proposal in Britain's name and pushed the Netherlands into supporting it in a bid to give the impression that they are working with the international community," the ruling Baath Party's Al Thawra daily said.

The American administration, which has confiscated the international will, is carrying out an aggressive plot," the newspaper said.

Britain on Friday presented a joint proposal with the Netherlands, calling for the U.N. Special Commission (UNSCOM) charged with Iraqi disarmament to be replaced with a "reinforced" weapons inspections body.

The British proposal also would keep in

place current sanctions, in force since the 1990 invasion of Kuwait, but allow Iraq to sell all the crude oil it wants. A separate Russian plan calls for the lifting of all U.N. sanctions while introducing a "reinforced" programme of control and verification to ensure that Iraq does not rebuild an arsenal of biological, chemical, nuclear weapons and long-range missiles.

To encourage Baghdad's compliance, the Russians propose lifting non-military sanctions which have caused so much hardship to 22 million Iraqis. U.S. Deputy Ambassador to the United Nations Peter Burleigh told journalists "I don't think it is a serious proposal, we're not going to treat it as such," adding that "we have some problems" with the British-Dutch proposal.

Discussions are likely to continue for several weeks given the problems in achieving consensus among the 15 council members on U.N. policy toward Iraq, diplomats say.

Settlement population growth similar under both Likud, Labour

(Continued from page 1)

According to the statistics bureau, the rate of growth of the settlement population remained seven per cent for 1996, then peaked at nine per cent in 1997 before falling back the next year to seven per cent.

Netanyahu's settlement policy has been seen by the Palestinians and foreign governments as more damaging to the peace process because it involves the occupation of additional land well inside the West Bank.

Since October, when Israel signed the Wye River peace accord pledging to return more of the West Bank to Palestinian rule, settlers have been allowed to occupy at least 18 hilltops outside or on the outer boundaries of existing settlements.

Netanyahu froze the West Bank withdrawals in December, citing alleged Palestinian violations of the Wye accord.

The recent land grabs have not increased the settler population but have extended Israeli hold over key territory ahead

of negotiations on the final status of the occupied areas.

The government figures do not include Jews who have moved into housing developments built in Arab east Jerusalem since the sector was occupied in 1967 and then illegally annexed as part of Israel's "eternal capital."

Both the Labour and Netanyahu governments have encouraged Jewish settlement of Arab east Jerusalem, where 180,000 Jews and around 200,000 Arabs currently live.

(Continued from page 1)

Soon they will be bolstered by 24 U.S. Apache anti-tank helicopter gunships. NATO said the first Apaches were expected in Albania by Monday. An Albanian military source said Sunday that several had already arrived elsewhere in the country.

NATO Secretary General Javier Solana told BBC television that alliance military leaders were concentrating on defeating Milosevic in the air. But he did not rule out sending in ground troops, a subject of growing speculation among Western analysts.

"We are not going to change the policy now... But if the moment comes that it is necessary, I am sure that the countries who belong to NATO would be ready to do it," he said.

British Prime Minister Tony Blair took the same line, saying NATO was keeping all options, including the use of ground troops, under review.

U.S. President Bill Clinton, writing in London's Sunday Times, said Milosevic could end the crisis immediately by withdrawing his forces from Kosovo, letting in an international security force and allowing refugees to return home and enjoy self-rule.

"But if he will not do that, our campaign will continue, shifting the balance of power against him until we succeed," he said. "Ultimately, Mr. Milosevic must either cut his mounting losses or lose his ability to maintain his grip on Kosovo."

Another British newspaper, The Observer, said NATO was laying plans for a ground invasion, perhaps as early as the

end of May.

It said 80,000 troops had been earmarked for the operation, including American soldiers already training in Colorado.

The paper cited the sources as saying the accelerated timetable followed insistence by NATO's political leaders that the bombing campaign must be over within three months.

Clinton said Serbia needed a democratic transition, "for the region cannot be secure with a belligerent tyrant in its midst."

Yugoslavia's neighbours and Western states came under new pressure to cope with the refugee exodus after a temporary lull when Yugoslavia closed its borders.

About 28,000 hungry and exhausted refugees have passed through Albania's main border crossing with

Yugoslavia in the 48 hours to mid-Sunday, the largest influx in 10 days. Refugees have told aid workers 50,000 or more may be following behind.

Relief officials in northern Albania said the latest arrivals — in cars, trucks and on foot — were in the worst condition they had seen.

A car full of refugees hit a landmine near the Morina crossing into Albania, killing five, Western monitors said.

In Washington, a spokeswoman for U.S. First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton said she was considering travelling to Albania to get a first-hand look at humanitarian relief operations.

The U.N. refugee agency says over half of Kosovo's 1.8 million people have fled their homes fearing Serb attacks since NATO air strikes began on March 24. NATO officials

say Milosevic may be trying to drive most of the Albanians from the province.

Bulgarian state radio reported that NATO had asked to use Bulgarian airspace for the bombing campaign against neighbouring Yugoslavia. The government agreed in principle to such a move last October.

The Yugoslav army on Sunday issued an arrest warrant for a senior Montenegrin politician critical of Milosevic, Deputy Prime Minister Novak Killbarda. The move comes amid a power struggle for control of Montenegro, which along with much larger Serbia makes up Yugoslavia.

Meanwhile, Milosevic's wife, Mira Markovic, a powerful political figure in her own right, accused British Foreign Secretary Robin Cook of lying by saying members of her family had fled Yugoslavia.

JORDAN TELEVISION

Tel. 4773111-19

PROGRAMME TWO

18:00 Children's Programme — Lucky Luke
19:00Le Journal
19:15French Programme
19:30News headlines
19:33French Programme
20:00Worldnet
20:30French Programme
21:30Encounter
22:00News in English
22:30F.X.

PRAYER TIMES

03:56Fair
05:15(Sunrise) Doha
11:38Dhuhr
15:12Asr
18:01Maghreb
19:20Isha

CHURCHES

St. Mary of Nazareth Church
Swefieh, Tel. 5920740
Assemblies of God Church Tel.
4632785
St. Joseph Church Tel. 4624590
Terra Sancta Church Tel. 4622366
Anglican Church Tel.
4624853/4624811.
St. Athanasius Syrian Orthodox
Church Tel. 4771751.
Amman International Church
Tel. 5865897
German-speaking Evangelical
Congregation Tel. 5688404

The Evangelical Local Church

in Amman Tel. 5811295
Church of Jesus Christ of Latter
Day Saints Tel. 4654932
St. John the Baptist at De la
Salle College Tel. 5661757
Church of the Annunciation Tel.
4637440
Greek Orthodox Church Tel.
4646138
Church of Presentation, Swe-
fieh Tel. 5920146
The United Catholic Church
Tel. 4634757
The English-Language Catholic
Parish Tel. 4614190
Evangelical Free Church Tel.
4892679
The Baptist Church Tel.
4628052
The Armenian Catholic Church
4771331
The Armenian Orthodox
Church Tel. 4775261

WEATHER

Bulletin supplied by the Depart-
ment of Meteorology
Relative hot weather conditions
will prevail with clouds appearing
at different altitudes and winds
southeasterly moderate becoming
northwesterly moderate in the
afternoon. In Aqaba, it will be
hot, winds northerly moderate,

and seas calm.
Min./Max. temp.
Amman16/31
Aqaba20/37
Deserts14/32
Jordan Valley19/36
Yesterday's high temperatures:
Amman 31 Aqaba 37 Humidity
readings: Amman 21 per cent.
Aqaba 30 per cent.

Following are the temperatures
expected today in the following
areas:
Ajloun12/26
Jerash16/32
Um Qays14/32
Madaba12/29
Petra13/31
Dead Sea18/34

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS NIGHT DUTY

AMMAN:
Dr. Mukhlis Halseh5519220
Dr. Ghazi Abu Shkha4752405
Dr. Yousef Faqih4390104
Dr. Fadl Al Karib5865456
AMMAN:
Firas Pharmacy5661912
Al Salam Pharmacy4636730

JORDAN TIMES DAILY GUIDE AND CALENDAR

Mayadah Pharmacy5537004
Rakia Al Dawa Pharmacy5336169
IRBID:
Dr. Ali Shuqairi(02) 7100069
Fou'ad Pharmacy(02) 725360
ZARQA:
Dr. Issa Al Omari(05) 901266
Palestine Pharmacy(05) 983562
EMERGENCIES
Food Control Centre4637111
Civil Defence Department5661111
Civil Defence Immediate Rescue4630341
Civil Defence Emergency199
Rescue Police192, 4621111, 4637777
Fire Brigade4617101
Blood Bank4775121
Highway Police5343402
Traffic Police4896390
Public Security Dept.4630321
Hotel Complaints5605800
Price Complaints5661176
Water & Sewerage Complaints4897467
Amman Municipality Complaints4757111
Telephone Information (directory assistance)121
Overseas Calls0132
Central Amman Telephone Repairs4623101
Abdali Tel. Repairs5661101
Jordan Television4773111
Radio Jordan4774111
Water Authority5680100
J. Electricity Authority5815615

HOSPITALS

AMMAN:
The Arab Centre for Heart and Special Surgery5921199
The Islamic, Abdli56661317
Husseini Medical Centre5856856
Luzmila4630195
Khalidi Maternity4642816
Akileh Maternity4642441/2
Jabal Amman Maternity4642362
Malhas, J. Amman4636140
Palestine, Shmeisari5607071
Shmeisari Hospital5607431
Jordan Hospital5607550
University Hospital5353444
Al-Muasher Hospital56672719
Al-Ahli, Abdali56841646
Italian, Al-Muhajreen4771013
Al-Bashir4775111/26
Army, Madra4891611/15
Queen Alia Hospital5157100
Amal Hospital5607155
Al-Amal Cancer Centre5353000
Jerusalem Hospital4387181

FOR THE TRAVELLER
QUEEN ALIA
INTERNATIONAL
AIRPORT
This information is supplied by
Royal Jordanian (RJ) Information
department at the Queen Alia International
Airport Tel. (44) 53200-5,
where it should always be verified.
Information on other flights can be
supplied on phone 44 (52700).
Information on Royal Wings flights
can be supplied on phone
4375201-5

ARRIVALS

Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights
07:05Sanaa (RJ)
08:30Damascus (RJ)
08:30Jeddah (RJ)
09:15New Delhi (RJ)
ZARQA:
Zarqa Govt. Hospital(05) 983323
Zarqa National Hospital(05) 900560
Ibo Sina Hospital(05) 986731
Al Hikma Modern Hospital

DEPARTURES

Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights
05:35Beirut (RJ)
10:35Frankfurt, Torino (RJ)
10:45Kuwait (RJ)
11:20Shannon, Chicago (RJ)
12:15Cairo (RJ)
12:25London (RJ)
20:45Damascus (RJ)
20:45Bahrain, Doha (RJ)
21:00Abu Dhabi, Tehran (RJ)
21:00Tel Aviv (add) (RJ)
21:05Dubai, Abu Dhabi (RJ)

Other Flights
10:40Khartoum (SD)
13:10Bahrain (GF)
13:10Milan (AZ)
14:00Vienna (OS)
14:15Doha (QR)
15:25Doha, Abu Dhabi (EK)
17:05Tel Aviv (LY)
17:20Istanbul (SD)
17:35Beirut (ME)
17:50Frankfurt (LH)
21:30Cairo (MS)
00:55London, Damascus (BA)
01:25Athens, Beirut (DA)

ROYAL WINGS (RW)

08:50Aqaba (arriving at QAIA)
(RW)
17:30 Gaza (arriving at QAIA)
(RW)
18:00 Aqaba (arriving at Marka
Airport)
23:15 Tel Aviv (arriving at QAIA)
(RW)
09:15New Delhi (RJ)

Other Flights

10:30Cairo (MS)
11:40Istanbul (SD)
14:00Bahrain (GF)
14:00Milan (AZ)
14:50Vienna (OS)
15:15Doha (QR)
16:30Dubai (EK)
18:20Khartoum (SD)
18:35Beirut (ME)
20:00Tel Aviv (LY)
20:45Beirut, Athens (OA)
05:55Damascus, London (BA)
06:10Frankfurt (LH)

ROYAL WINGS (RW)

08:30 Aqaba (from Marka Airport)
(RW)
13:30 Gaza (from Marka Airport)
(RW)
20:30Aqaba (from QAIA) (RW)
21:00Tel Aviv (from QAIA) (RW)



University of Jordan President Walid Maani and representatives of Washington University and the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) open a three-day conference on economic and social cooperation between universities. The meeting is organised by the university's Centre of Environmental and Water Research and Studies in conjunction with USAID and Washington University (Petra photo)

BirdLife International opens Amman office, seeks protected areas for endangered birds

By Dana Charkasi

AMMAN — The Middle East Office of BirdLife International was officially launched in a workshop organised jointly by BirdLife International and the Royal Society for the Conservation of Nature (RSCN) on Sunday.

Minister of Municipal and Rural Affairs and the Environment deputised at the launch for Her Majesty Queen Noor Al Hussein who patronises the RSCN.

Among many distinguished guests was HRH Prince Firas Ben Ra'd. Participants of the workshop emphasised the importance of raising public awareness and increasing cooperation between the countries in the region to insure the protection of birds and their habitats.

BirdLife International is a non-governmental organisation that strives for the conservation of birds, their habitats and global biodiversity by working with local populations towards sustainability in the use of natural resources.

Sunday's workshop represented most Middle Eastern governments, which are expected to build partnerships with BirdLife International.

BirdLife International, in its new policy of decentralisation has moved the Middle East office from Cambridge to Amman. The new regional office will be located at the RSCN, a partner of BirdLife International.

Task of the Amman office will be to conduct studies in order to identify endangered bird species, locate their habitats in the Middle East and to create strategies and coordinate them among the different countries to protect these birds and their habitats.

"The number of species that were identified in the area were 800 of which 60 are indigenous in the region. About 24 of them are endangered species. In Jordan, we are currently

updating an old study conducted by the society in 1976. We have located several new small areas as important areas for birds and we hope to get the approval of the government to assign those areas as protected areas," said Anis Mousher, RSCN president.

Abdul Aziz Abu Zinada, secretary general of the National Commission for Wildlife Conservation and Development in Saudi Arabia, emphasised the importance of birds as indicators of ecosystem health in his speech.

Jordan and its neighbouring countries play an important role as a hub during migratory birds' twice yearly migration.

Migratory birds, such as the falcons, migrating twice a year crossing among other countries in the Middle East, Jordan, are often endangered by hunting in the countries they choose as their resting place.

Some of the participating countries in the workshop were signatories of the Convention Against International Trade in Endangered Species, but are known not to be implementing the convention thus indicating an increase of interest for the problem.

CITES has slapped a total ban on trading of endangered fauna and flora.

"Most species that are illegally traded are mainly falcons which are used in traditional falconry. The [falcon] trade should not be stopped totally, but it should be managed. Local people for thousands of years have been capturing and training these birds for falconry," Adnan Budieri, head of the Middle East Division of BirdLife International, told the Jordan Times on the sidelines of the workshop.

On the Arabian Peninsula, the hobby of falconry is a very prestigious and long practised one.

Some of the participants conceded to the Jordan Times that in addition to

keeping falcons for sport, the region faces a problem of falcon hunting.

"Falconry in the past was a sustainable way of hunting. Now hunters use four-wheel-drive cars, the latest technologies to track the birds, and even guns to hunt them. The formerly predatory bird now is the prey. We are trying to raise people's awareness through awareness campaigns to show the need of special protection for these birds," Abu Zinada told the Jordan Times.

"Governments should have strict laws and enforce them to prevent hunters from coming. All countries in the region should cooperate in this matter," he added.

"[Hunting] is a very popular hobby. But it is not as it had been in the past... people still need more awareness," said Nafaa Al Shamri, representative of the Kuwaiti Society for the Protection of Animals.

Jordan, as a signatory to CITES, has a local law issued by the Ministry of Agriculture in 1973 banning the hunting and the keeping of wildlife in Jordan and providing legal instruments to protect endangered species.

"The problem is implementation of the law and the level of awareness among people who should be implementing the law. Also, although Jordan has signed CITES, it is not neither included in the environmental law nor in the constitution," Budieri said.

Marco Lambertini, director of network and programme, BirdLife International Secretariat, said that Jordan should next be moving from the protected area approach to a wider environmental approach to tackle bigger policies such as rural agricultural grazing policies.

"The commitment you have in Jordan and the good cooperation between NGOs here and the government is a very good base to [go ahead]," he said.

FM urges international pressure on Israel to force compliance with signed peace accords

LONDON (J.T.) — Minister of Foreign Affairs Abdul Ilah Khatib on Sunday urged the international community to pressure Israel into implementing the peace accords signed with the Palestinians and to resume peace negotiations on the Syrian and Lebanese tracks.

In a statement published by the London-based Arabic daily al Hayat, Khatib said there were no basic differences among Arab countries concerning the peace process, and that Arab states are unanimously committed to peace. But, he said, there are differing opinions on certain details.

The peace process hinges on the implementation of U.N. Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338 which call for Israel to withdraw its forces from Arab territories occupied in the 1967 war, said Khatib.

The Palestinians' struggle to regain their own homeland and determine their future is recognised by the world community at large and it is hoped that the peace process will enable them to achieve this right, noted the minister in the interview, conducted in Stuttgart where he attended the Euro-Med conference.

Referring to Jordanian-Palestinian relations, Khatib said the two sides maintain

strong relations and no doubt the future relations can be determined once the Palestinian people exercise their sovereignty on their national soil. However, priority is now given to extending support to Palestinian negotiators to regain the Palestinian rights.

Referring to the outcome of the Stuttgart conference, which grouped the European Union nations and the countries of the Mediterranean partnership, Khatib said it was very encouraging. He added that the meeting displayed the fact that the two sides are making progress, paving the way for the adoption of a charter on security, stability and peace.

Asked about Jordan's relations with Iraq, Khatib said His Majesty King Abdullah has reaffirmed Jordan's position in this respect. He said the Kingdom is keen to protect the interests of the Iraqi people and hopes that their suffering will end soon.

He said Jordan can by no means feel at ease with the Iraqi people's suffering.

At the conference in Stuttgart, Khatib delivered Jordan's address reaffirming the country's endeavours to attain stronger economic cooperation with the European nations.

'Third Way' movement offers alternative in UJ student council elections

By Saad G. Hattar

AMMAN — Students at the University of Jordan, the largest and oldest in the Kingdom, will go to the polls on Monday to elect a new student council, with a new, middle ground secular current seeking a seat in the board.

The "Third Way," which has only one candidate running for the four-seat Faculty of Medicine, presents itself as an "unbiased and tolerant" movement, away from "dogmatic or narrow racial and sectarian trends."

"We offer a 10-point programme based on academic and social projects in favour of university students," said the movement's candidate Mohammad Ghannam.

Ghannam tried his luck in last year's elections but failed to secure a seat by a very narrow margin. He was joined then by another colleague in the elections

for Faculty of Engineering.

The 80-member student council has always been a haven for the powerful Islamic current, which is active and well organised. Last year, the Islamists controlled 53 seats on the council, and have always maintained a strong presence in order to have a say in student affairs.

Ghannam said the new trend has been criticised by both the Islamists and the nationalist current.

"Each of the two fronts accuses us of belonging to the other camp," he told the Jordan Times. "But we do work independently."

"Unlike other forces on the campus, we do not enjoy backing from any outside party," stressed Ghannam.

With 23,000 students, the University of Jordan, established in the early 1960's, is the oldest of the Kingdom's six public universities.

Therefore, the student council elections in this major university often serve as a barometer of political trends inside and outside the campus.

Programmes of the Third Way movement include hitherto untapped social and academic demands, its members say.

It calls for the Arabisation of the medical curriculum, which is now taught in English, and deepening religious and nationalist tolerance within the society.

Nearly 50 per cent of Jordan's 4.6 million people trace their roots to Palestine. Roughly five per cent of the country's population are Christians.

The new campus trend plans to strike a constructive inter-faith dialogue, raise medical awareness regarding sexually transmitted diseases and combat the proliferation of drug abuse among students.

News in brief

Public Freedoms Committee meets

AMMAN (Petra) — The Lower House of Parliament's Public Freedoms Committee convened on Sunday under the chairmanship of Deputy Mohammad Azaydeh. The committee discussed issues related to public freedoms and complaints raised by some people on freedom-related matters.

Khalaf leaves for Qatar today

AMMAN (Petra) — Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Planning Rima Khalaf leaves on Monday to take part in a two-day conference in Qatar. Khalaf will present the financial programmes of certain development projects in the Kingdom to other Arab financial commissions.

Abu Ghaida addresses contractors

AMMAN (Petra) — Minister of Public Works and Housing Hosni Abu Ghaida stressed on Sunday that Jordanian contractors are a pillar of the Jordanian economy which should be helped. Speaking at a meeting with the president and members of the contractors association council, Abu Ghaida said that the government is giving this sector attention and that it will support the sector by amending its laws to meet its needs.

Fayez visits vocational centres

AMMAN (Petra) — Minister of Labour Eid Fayez on Sunday inspected some vocational training centres in the Marka region. The minister was briefed on the centres' utilities, and voiced his satisfaction for their performance, saying that these centres are considered regional and they help train students from other Arab countries.

Rfoua' meets Algerian, Iraqi ambassadors

AMMAN (Petra) — Minister of Social and Administrative Development Faisal Rfoua' on Sunday met with Algerian Ambassador to Jordan Hamid Shbeirah to discuss bilateral relations and cooperation. During the meeting, Shbeirah expressed appreciation of the country's distinguished ties, and praised the Hashemite leadership's stand in support of Algeria. Rfoua' stressed Jordan's readiness to cooperate in all fields. Also on Sunday, Rfoua' received Iraqi Ambassador to Amman for talks on joint cooperation.

Man questioned in murder attempt on wife, children

AMMAN (J.T.) — Police in Zarqa and Ruseifa are questioning a 55-year-old man from Ruseifa identified as R.A.H. after he tried to kill all six members of his family by setting the house on fire.

Only one of his children aged 10 years died in the fire while the man's 75-year-old mother sustained injuries and is being treated in a hospital, according to a report in the local press on Sunday.

The report, quoting police sources, said the man quarrelled with his wife and in a fit of anger opened the gas cylinder and started a fire which burnt the house completely. Three of the children escaped through the windows.

The man's quarrel with his wife, who also escaped the fire, was due to his wife's decision to leave the family according to police sources, who said the man was arrested immediately after the incident.

Plastic surgery enjoys growing popularity in Jordan as confidence grows in the practice

By Dima Hamdan

AMMAN — When we hear the term "plastic surgery," most of us think of words like "breast implants," "nose jobs," "liposuction," and a variety of other terms mainly relating to cosmetic enhancement.

The term "laser," on the other hand, is recognised as a modality for the treatment of eyesight and hair-removal. While all of these ideas are correct, much more should be known about these operations, which have become the "hype" in Jordan over the past few years.

Plastic surgery was introduced to Jordan nearly 30 years ago. Ghaiith Shbeilat, a plastic and reconstructive surgeon, was one of the first to introduce this surgery through his work with the army.

He explained that a surgeon must become fully qualified in the reconstructive field — the field dealing with the treatment of traumas, disfigurements and severed limbs — before specialising in the cosmetic.

Although there are no official statistics on the number of cosmetic surgeries performed in the Kingdom's private sector hospitals, doctors confirm that there is a significant demand for the service from both local and foreign patients.

Surveys by the King Hussein Medical Centre show that Farah Rehabilitation Centre conducted 1,740 cosmetic surgeries in 1996, and 2,174 in 1997.

"Half of my patients come for aesthetic surgery," said Ahmad Hussein, a private plastic and

reconstructive surgeon. "Most of them are females."

Private surgeons say that they receive significant numbers of patients from the Gulf states — mainly Saudi Arabia and Bahrain — Syria, Lebanon, and a few from Europe as well.

The removal of facial hair through laser treatment is also becoming more popular. Shbeilat says that he performed more than 600 hair-removal operations since the treatment was introduced to Jordan in 1996.

"The world's experience [in this operation] is two-and-a-half-years, and our experience is two years. So we're quite on the cutting edge," said Shbeilat.

Despite increasing demand and confidence in these operations, misconceptions still circulate among both patients and

doctors.

"Some people believe that liposuction, breast implants, or removing dark spots from the skin could cause cancer," said Hussein. "In reality, not removing them might cause cancer."

There is a debate worldwide about the health risks of plastic surgery, especially breast implants. Some doctors argue that implants might cause tissue diseases or may even rupture, in which case, the patient is required to have another operation.

Some people have reservations against aesthetic surgery because of religious reasons.

"People think [aesthetic surgery] is forbidden by religion," said Hussein. "They believe that this is interference in God's creation."

In order to establish

credibility and invalidate misconceptions, doctors advise their patients to educate themselves by reading medical articles and watching special programmes before they decide to do the operation.

Shbeilat stressed that "patients should not be taken for a ride."

"They have the right to demand to see results and to look at photos [of previous patients]," he said.

Normal complications, such as infections, are likely to occur after an operation.

Patients who go through a laser operation for hair-removal, for example, should not be exposed to the sun for at least three months lest they get skin burns. Dark skinned people run the risk of hyperpigmentation.

But Shbeilat assures that laser results are very

encouraging. "The main proof [that these operations are successful] is that people keep coming back and they also send others to my clinic," he said.

However, malpractice in some operations could lead to grave consequences.

"In aesthetic surgery you do not get health problems, but malpractice could spoil the appearance," said Hussein. "In reconstructive surgery, bad results could impair the function of the limb, or lead to disfigurement."

He explained that surgeons in Jordan are graduates of at least 50 different schools, most of which are located in the U.S. and Europe, where they obtain different levels of knowledge and professional skills. Therefore, they should be further educated

to raise their standards to a comparable level.

Plastic surgery and laser operations are usually not affordable to the majority of Jordan's 4.6 million population, whose average income is less than \$1,500 per year.

A nose operation, for example, could cost as much as JD1,800 (\$2,500) if the patient receives first class treatment. A more complex surgery, like a complete face lift, could cost JD4,000-5,000.

"A nose job in the U.S. in a good centre could cost \$10,000-15,000," said Shbeilat.

However, doctors insist that prices are low in comparison with other countries, especially considering that the cost of the equipment is very high.

Shbeilat said the average price tag for any piece of medical cosmetic equip-

ment starts at \$150,000, and constant technological improvements mean that equipment should be updated often.

"These machines are like computers. Once a new machine is introduced, the old one becomes obsolete," he said.

Doctors maintain that specialised centres should be built to accommodate larger volumes of patients. This would help lower the cost by minimising the number of machines purchased for the operations.

"Every private hospital must have sections for heart, kidney, surgery and so forth," said Shbeilat. "If we were to divide [specialisations among each hospital] it would be much more economical for the country."

Indian opposition struggling to form new government

NEW DELHI (AFP) — Indian opposition leaders struggled here Sunday to piece together a new government after toppling the 13-month-old Hindu nationalist-led coalition in parliament.

But the main opposition Congress party seemed to have no clue on how to fill the political vacuum left Saturday by the resignation of Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee.

Other smaller opposition parties, which had vowed to forge a viable credible new administration after the Hindu nationalists' fall, also groped in the dark despite day-long close-door talks.

Congress officials said they were awaiting Indian President K.R. Narayanan to ask them to try form an alternative government, but admitted there were several hitches.

The outgoing premier's Hindu nationalist BJP party pounced on the divisions in opposition ranks to accuse them of creating political anarchy, and hinted at early general elections.

"Going by the arithmetics of the present parliament, no other alternative is possible," BJP spokesman M. Venkaiah Naidu told reporters.

"Developments since yesterday are proving our stand correct. The opposition is not able to come forward with any alternative government it had pledged to provide within an hour of our fall," he said.

said. Sonia Gandhi, the Italian-born widow of assassinated premier Rajiv Gandhi and Congress president, held a string of meetings with party leaders to formulate a strategy.

But it was not clear if she would become the new prime minister.

A senior Congress leader, Arjun Singh, denied the party was "whistling in the dark. We have the strength to carry everyone with us."

But one of his colleagues, Pranab Mukherjee, was less upbeat.

"We have a fractured mandate and there are problems," he said.

The Congress is the second largest party in the 545-member parliament, but only commands 140 seats of its own.

There are nearly 40 parties in parliament, some with just a single MP, presenting Congress with a mismatched political smorgasbord from which to select its supporters.

And some smaller parties which joined hands with the Congress to topple the Hindu nationalists are opposed to propping up the Congress and would rather prefer elections.

Opposition leaders admitted the Congress would be hard pushed to provide a credible and stable government given the conflicting demands of the myriad anti-nationalist groups.

"A coalition government is going to pose problems," communist leader Doraiswamy Raja told AFP. "The different claims by different parties will have to be sorted out."

"How it will finally emerge is yet to be seen," he added.

The Congress is believed to be split over whether it should take power on its own, with the backing of other parties from the outside, or form a fresh coalition.

Problems are expected to come from regional and ambitious opposition leaders who compete with the 114-year-old Congress for political space in the country's populous north.

For the moment, the regional parties are avoiding statements that could hint at disunity.

"Right now we're not in a position to say anything. Let us consult everyone concerned," said one party leader, Mualyam Singh Yadav.

Laloo Yadav, another leader, was equally non-committal.

"We are keeping our options open on joining or supporting a new government. We will await the decision of the Congress on the issue," he said.

The nearly 50-seat leftist group in parliament admitted Sunday that it was divided on backing the Congress, its traditional foe.



Activists of Bangladesh's ruling Awami League government march through the streets of Dhaka in response to an opposition-led nationwide strike April 18. The Awamis urged residents to ignore the strike and join the government's efforts to lead the country towards development and attain the people's economic well-being (Reuters photo)

Fifty hurt in Bangladesh strike violence

DHAKA (R) — At least 50 people were injured, including two victims of bombs hurled at a bus, in violence triggered by a nationwide strike in Bangladesh on Sunday.

The strike, called by opposition parties to protest against recent power and water shortages, largely paralysed the country.

Doctors at Dhaka medical college hospital said they treated a bus operator and a passenger for wounds caused by the bombs.

Witnesses said the other were injured when opposition activists battled police in different parts of the capital.

Police used teargas and batons to try to disperse activists armed with home-made bombs and sticks. Police said they arrested more than 60 opposition activists in the capital Dhaka alone.

The strike shut down business in Dhaka except for a few rickshaws and taxis. Offices, banks, schools and markets were closed, witnesses said. Sunday is a normally a working day in Muslim Bangladesh.

Opposition activists halted a train in northern Bangladesh while civil aviation officials said two domestic flights were cancelled. The country's main Chittagong port and two stock exchanges did not operate, officials said.

But strike organisers said they passed a relatively

peaceful day.

"Overall, today's strike has been successful and generally peaceful," said a young leader of main opposition Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP), who declined to be named.

President Shahabuddin Ahmed, widely regarded as a neutral figure, urged the country's feuding political groups to "give concessions to others for settlement of their disputes and developing tolerance," the official BSS news agency said.

"The country now witnesses extreme disunity and political confrontation instead of desired consensus and mutual cooperation... to solve basic problems," BSS quoted the president as saying.

The BNP, led by former prime minister Begum Khaleda Zia who called the strike, said Sunday's dawn-to-dusk stoppage was aimed at the deterioration of public services and in law and order.

The strike was supported by the BNP's allies, the Jatiya Party, the Jamaat-e-Islami party and the Islami Oikyo Jote.

They accuse Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina of inefficiency and corruption and want her to step down. She denies the charges.

Analysts warn that continuing political confrontation would prove a drag on the country's already weakened economy.

"Political chaos will further affect the country's sickly industrial sector," said Professor Muzaffar Ahmed of Dhaka University's Institute of Business Administration.

"If the chaos continues, it will affect the economy in long-term declining investment and shrinking industrial growth," he told Reuters.

Amir Hossain Amu, a central leader of the ruling Awami League, termed the strike as a "mindless act".

"The strike has been fuelled by the fundamentalist and autocratic allies of the BNP trying to whip up a chaotic situation and capture power," he said.

Mujahidul Islam Selim, general secretary of Bangladesh Communist Party, criticised both the government and opposition for "abandoning political commitments" and pushing the country into an unending political row.

"In this political culture... hopes of political stability and economic progress are remote. If the present trend of political chaos and confrontation continues for long, the country is going to drift into disaster," he said.

The opposition has staged a series of violent strikes since Hasina took office in June 1996, including a marathon 66-hour stoppage last February. Parliamentary elections are not due until 2001.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Radical students stage street protests in Seoul

SEOUL, South Korea (AP) — About 1,000 radical students staged street rallies in downtown Seoul Sunday, protesting what they called a government crackdown on their leftist movement. The students are members of Hanchongryon, a nationwide umbrella of student councils that was banned by the government for its allegedly pro-North Korea stance. Among other things, the group supports a North Korean demand that the United States withdraw its 37,000 troops stationed in the south, saying its presence blocks the unification of the two Koreas. The students had planned to elect a new leadership at a Seoul campus over the weekend that will guide their group in the next year, but failed to do so because major campuses were blocked by some 11,000 riot police. The police challenged young pedestrians to show identification and searched their bags near campuses and subway stations. But there has been no report of clashes or injuries. The students gathered at Seoul's central train station and shouted anti-government and anti-U.S. slogans for several hours. North and South Korea are technically in a state of war because their 1950-53 Korean war ended with an armistice, not a peace treaty. Their border is one of the world's most heavily armed.

Injured Kosovo children arrive in France for treatment

PARIS (AFP) — Two ethnic Albanian children wounded in the Kosovo conflict arrived here for treatment Sunday, the first of over 300 refugees expected in France over the weekend. Isuf, aged two, and Brikena, seven, arrived at Le Bourget airport north of Paris aboard a French military plane from the Albanian capital Tirana and were rushed to a hospital in the capital. Brikena was suffering from bullet wounds to the body while Isuf had been injured in the throat and could only be fed by tube. The children were accompanied by family members who will be put up by French families near Paris, where the children will join them after being discharged from hospital. Meanwhile in the southeastern city of Lyon, officials were preparing to receive 308 Kosovo refugees flying in from Macedonia Sunday. The ethnic Albanians were transferred from the Macedonia refugee camp at Stenkovec, near the Yugoslav border, to the capital Skopje and were due to arrive in Lyon on three flights from there, the first set to touch down at 1:20 p.m. (11:20 GMT). The ethnic Albanians, who fled the conflict in Kosovo, will be cared in Lyon for in eight reception centres by an organisation dedicated to refugees and asylum seekers.

Controversial Russian tycoon to return to Moscow

MOSCOW (AFP) — Russia's most controversial tycoon Boris Berezovsky was set to return to Moscow from France on Sunday, after prosecutors lifted an arrest warrant that had driven him into a brief exile. Berezovsky told the Interfax news agency that he would leave his refuge in France and arrive at Moscow's Sheremetyevo airport late Sunday. "All charges brought against me are a lie," Berezovsky was quoted as saying, referring to the arrest warrant issued 12 days ago but revoked on Wednesday. The warrant, issued in connection with alleged abuse of office and financial shenanigans at the Aeroflot national airline which Berezovsky formerly controlled, caused a sensation when it was issued on April 6. Observers saw it as a move by Communists allied with Prime Minister Yegor Gennady Primakov to sideline the influential former Kremlin kingpin Berezovsky and whittle away his power base by forcing him to remain abroad. But when Berezovsky made it plain that he intended to return to Russia to clear his name, prosecutors suddenly and mysteriously withdrew the arrest warrant.

Chinese city to celebrate millennium of Bao Gong

BEIJING (AFP) — Magistrate Bao Zheng, known for his fairness and incorruptible nature a millennium ago, will be feted in a month-long activities in Kaifeng, in China's central Henan, reports said Sunday. A symposium will be held to mark his birth and there will be dramas depicting some of the trials over which he presided. Xinhua said. The city government of Kaifeng will also earmark 28 million yuan (\$3.4 million) to rebuild his office, it added. Bao Zheng, who is more commonly known as Bao Gong, was born in April 999 A.D. in the present-day Hebei city of Anhui province. He was magistrate of central Kaifeng in the period of the Northern Song dynasty (960-1127 A.D.) and highly esteemed for his strictness in upholding justice, it said. Eulogised in many Chinese literary works, and the protagonist of many Hong Kong, Taiwanese and Chinese television serials, Bao has always been presented as person with a black face. This was supposed to suggest his upright and impartial nature as a Chinese official, although historical records indicate he was a handsome man with a fair complexion, said Xinhua.

Nepal Maoists kill three police

KATHMANDU (AFP) — Three police have been killed in an ambush by Maoist insurgents at Gajul bridge in Rolpa district, police said on Sunday. The three police constables died in an ambush set by Maoist insurgents at Gajul bridge, which lies between Pipal village and Pokhara village in Rolpa district Saturday morning, a police spokesman said. Ganga Datta Panta died on spot, while two other constables, identified as Rajendra Bahadur Singh and Buddha Nagarkoti, died at a hospital. "Four others of the mobile police team that comprised 13 police personnel were injured in the ambush," the source said. Of the four, two were in critical condition. Police arrested 25 people in connection with the ambush. The Maoists have been waging a war since February 1996 against the present constitutional monarchy in Nepal, seeking to replace it with a republic. More than 650 lives have been lost in clashes between Maoists and police, according to official figures — human rights groups put the death toll in Maoist related violence at more than 800.

Gang burns 10 to death in Nigeria

LAGOS (AFP) — Ten people were burnt to death in their homes in Kaduna, northern Nigeria, last week by a gang targeting a community leader who had tried to stop its activities, reports said Sunday. Seven people suffered serious burns and were in hospital after the attack in the early hours of Friday morning, the state-owned Sunday Times newspaper said. The man targeted in the attack, Lado Dan Banga, escaped with burns and was recovering in hospital at the weekend but his mother, brothers and two children were among those who died, the paper reported. City police and hospital officials. Witnesses told the paper that four houses, including that belonging to Dan Banga, had been locked from the outside and then set on fire. Deputy Police Superintendent A. Mohammed told the paper the police had detained two people in connection with the attack and were still seeking others. Edward Ishaya, the chairman of the local council, said the council had agreed to pay the injured peoples' medical bills in recognition of their community work. Officials were not available Sunday to confirm the report.

Kosovo 'may' have been one of Clinton scandal casualties

WASHINGTON (AFP) — U.S. President Bill Clinton was distracted by his impeachment during a crucial time in negotiations to avert a crisis in Kosovo, The New York Times reported Sunday.

And increasing domestic criticism and questioning of Clinton's motives each time he took military action — as with the strikes in Iraq when the House was preparing to vote on his impeachment — may have reduced his diplomatic manoeuvring room, the paper said.

"Kosovo would have presented a daunting foreign policy challenge even to a president whose powers of persuasion and moral authority had not been damaged by a year of sex scandal and impeachment," the Times said.

"It is clear that his troubles gave him less manoeuvring room to make his decisions," the paper said. "Diplomacy, that came to rely heavily on military threats reduced the wiggle room even further."

As the extent of ethnic cleansing taking place in Kosovo becomes apparent, the president now face a chorus of criticism for not having acted earlier.

Also, U.S. intelligence assessments speculated that Yugoslav President Slobodan Milosevic would back down when faced with the threat of air strikes from the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation, the paper said.

"One interagency intelligence report coordinated by the (Central Intelligence Agency) in January 1999... concluded that 'Milosevic doesn't want a war he can't win,' the Times said.

"After enough of a defence to sustain his honour and assuage his backers he will quickly sue for peace," the assessment is quoted as saying.

With this advice from the CIA and his advisers, Clinton gambled that Milosevic would back down, the paper said.

A key date was Jan. 19, when Secretary of State

Madeleine Albright and other top administration officials met at the White House to discuss Kosovo, and Albright's recommendation to threaten NATO air strikes.

But, the president was not there, the Times said.

His lawyers were beginning their arguments in his impeachment trial on the Senate floor, and he was preparing for his State of the Union address.

The paper also quotes former Senator Bob Dole, who travelled to Kosovo in September. On returning he met with Clinton to discuss his findings.

Afterwards, Dole said, the president asked him to lobby his former Senate colleagues to vote against conviction in the impeachment trial.

"A lot of attention was diverted" from Yugoslavia and other foreign policy issues by the impeachment, Dole told the Times. It was "all consuming," he added. Kosovo "may have been one of the casualties."

'Voter irritation could hurt Gore White House bid'

WASHINGTON (AFP) — U.S. Vice President Al Gore's 2000 run for the White House could stumble on political fallout from the Monica Lewinsky affair, the Washington Post reported Sunday, citing a new poll.

The survey by the Pew Research Centre found Gore's popularity declining sharply, partly because many Americans have a negative view of President Bill Clinton and a series of Clinton administration controversies.

The poll found that the Democratic front-runner was behind two potential Republican rivals — former American Red Cross president Elizabeth Dole and Texas Governor George Bush, the Washington Post reported.

But more worrisome for the vice president is evidence he is being damaged by allegations of misconduct by Clinton, especially among women voters.

"The heart of Clinton's electoral strength," the poll said.

Some 74 per cent of respondents, including large majorities of Democrats, said they were "tired of all the problems associated with the Clinton administration," the nationwide poll of 1,786 adults found.

And when people were asked to describe Gore, the number one response was "boring."

"They are taking out their frustrations with Clinton on Gore," Pew Research Centre director Andrew Kohut told the Post. But Gore's own pollster

played down the survey, saying it was too early to draw conclusions in the 2000 presidential race.

"Vice presidents typically start off somewhere behind because they are famous but not fully known," Mark Penn told the paper.

Throughout last year's impeachment drama, Gore defended Clinton while condemning his personal behaviour.

On the day the House of Representatives voted to impeach the president, Gore said Clinton would "be regarded in the history books as one of our greatest presidents."

The telephone survey had a margin of error of plus or minus three percentage points and was conducted from March 24 to 30.

23 in hospital after London blast

LONDON (AFP) — Twenty-three people were treated in hospital Sunday after a homemade nail bomb exploded at a busy London market, while police puzzled over who was behind the attack.

"We simply don't know the motive," said a Scotland Yard spokeswoman, who stressed it was "far too early" to speculate on the identities of those responsible.

Four of the injured were in serious condition Sunday, including a 23-month-old toddler who underwent an operation to have a nail removed from his skull, medical sources said.

A total of 48 people, including two policemen, were injured in the blast Saturday afternoon near an underground rail station and a supermarket in Brixton, south London.

Police launched a major investigation but immediately ruled out the possibility that the Northern Irish separatist IRA was behind the attack, given the crudeness of the device and the target, a poorer area of London.

"It was completely indiscriminate. It was a crowded area on a Saturday afternoon," said junior Home Office Minister Kate Hoey, adding that whoever was responsible "wanted to even kill people."

She said that any link to Irish terrorism could probably be ruled out.

She also told GMTV television that she would be "very surprised" if there was a racial motive behind the attack in Brixton, which is home to the capital's largest black West Indian population. Local community militant Lee Jasper insisted how-

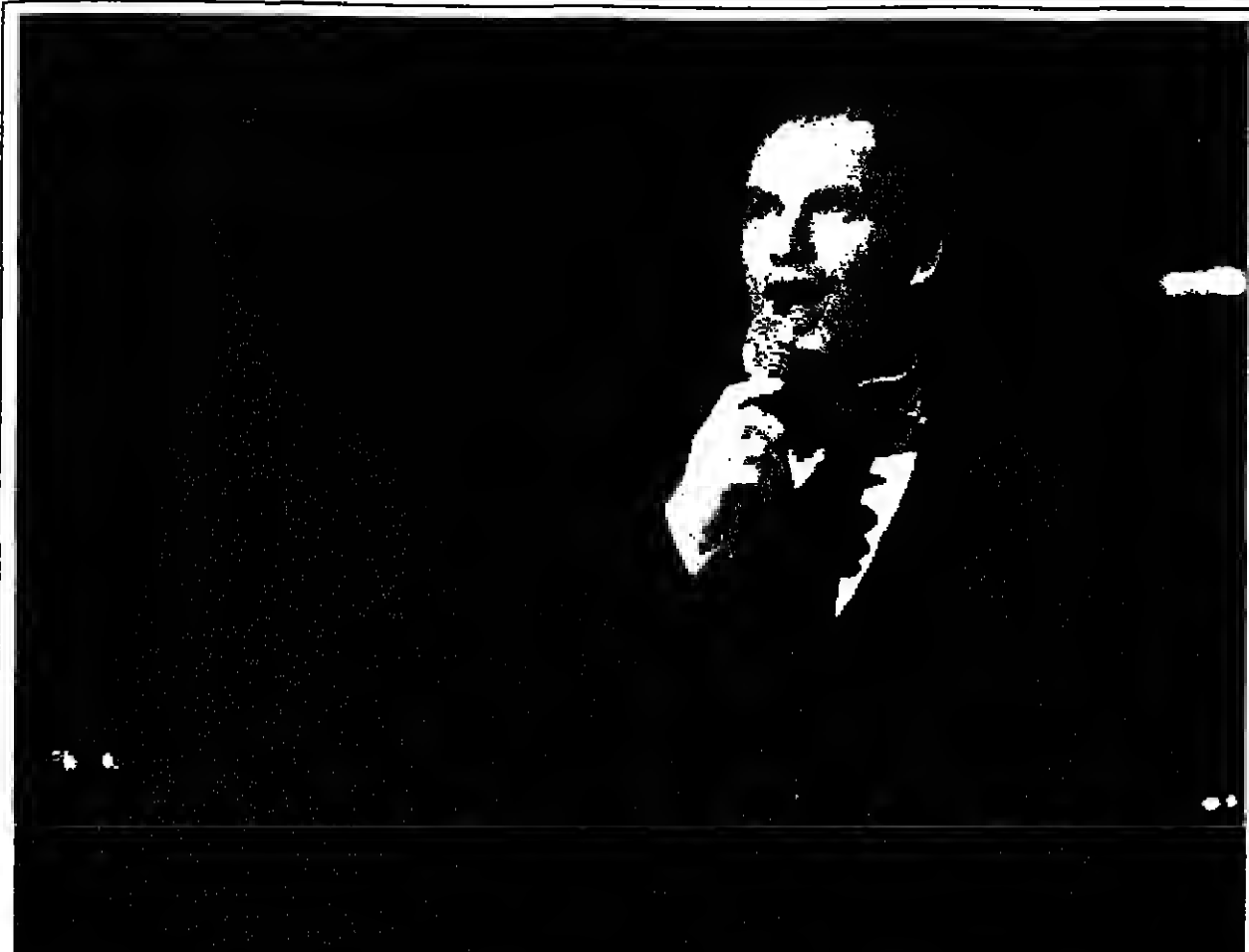
ever that a nail bomb in the Brixton market "could only be intended to inflict the maximum damage possible to the black community."

He suggested the attack was possibly a reaction to a recent official report calling for all-out war against racism in the police force as well as in society as a whole.

"If this is an act of racial terrorism, then it is the most severe escalation we have ever witnessed in the U.K.," Jasper said.

Forensics experts combed the blast scene for clues to the origin of the homemade bomb which was apparently hidden in a plastic bag, and investigators collected tapes from surveillance cameras in the area.

Most of the injured were treated for cuts from flying glass and the nails which were packed into the device.



Rock star Sting sings 'Witchcraft' during the 9th annual Rainforest concert April 17 at Carnegie Hall in New York City. The concert is held to raise money to save rainforests around the world (Reuters photo)

Korean Air denies report that flight recorders were found

SEOUL (AP) — Korean Air officials denied a report Sunday that police had found the flight recorders of a cargo jet that slammed into a Shanghai construction site last week.

China's state-run Xinhua news agency had reported that police searching the wreckage of the Korean Air plane located the black box containing the flight recorders on Saturday.

But Korean Air spokesman Kim Sung-joon said all that investigators have found is "pieces of a case that contained the black box," but not the black box itself.

He also denied a report

by Xinhua Saturday evening that said the bodies of only two of the plane's crew had been found. He said all three bodies had been recovered.

More than 2,000 police continued to scour for clues as to why the McDonnell Douglas MD-11 suddenly fell from the sky Thursday, just minutes after takeoff.

They have been joined by 40 officials from Korean Air and the South Korean government and five officials from the National Transportation Safety Board and the Federal Aviation Administration of the United States.

Several officials from Pratt and Whitney, which produced the plane's engines, also arrived to take part as observers while investigators from Boeing, which now owns McDonnell Douglas, are on the way.

All the plane's three crew members and six people on the ground were killed. Thirty-three others were injured, six seriously.

Police have had difficulty reaching the wreckage of the cockpit because it was embedded deeply in mud after having dropped 1,000 metres.

The aircraft narrowly missed seven-story apartment buildings as it

ploughed into the construction site and makeshift housing for migrant workers.

South Korean officials have said the plane may have exploded in mid-air, fuelling speculation that it was the target of a bomb planted by rival North Korea.

Meanwhile, Air Canada has announced Saturday it was cancelling code-sharing arrangements with Korean Air, Korean officials said. They did not reveal details.

It was the second airliner to do so, following Delta Airlines of the United States, since the accident occurred Thursday.

Dozens missing in E. Timor; 20 bodies found after rampage

DILI, East Timor (AFP) — Dozens of people were missing Sunday in East Timor after Saturday's unchecked rampage by armed pro-Jakarta militias which killed at least 20 people.

Streets were deserted Sunday, stores shut and stalls empty as residents hastened back to the relative safety of their homes after brief outings in the morning to attend mass.

"Anything can happen. They can kill, loot, do whatever they like, with the police and army looking on," said an East Timorese human rights activist believed to be a top target of the militias.

An official of the Indonesian government's human rights commission said police had found 20 bodies, including 12 at the home of pro-independence figure Manuel Carrascalao which came under attack by up to 300 militiamen.

Carrascalao, who was at the residence of Bishop Carlos Ximenes Belo when his house was attacked on Saturday, left for an unknown destination accompanied by the East Timor Deputy Police Chief, Colonel Muhafi Sahuji.

Shortly before Saturday's massacre the head of the militia had told a gathering in front of the residence of provincial governor Abilio Soares that a general cleansing of pro-independence elements would be carried out.

Witnesses said there were 126 people sheltering in Carrascalao's home at the time of the attack after having been driven out of their villages by militia.

Three or four people took refuge in the neighbouring bishop's house while 12 bodies were found in the rubble, according to police. The dead, the wounded and the others were loaded Saturday onto army trucks,

according to the Indonesian Red Cross, but it was impossible to trace where they ended up.

A journalist of the Indonesian private television station, Surya Citra Televisi, was allowed by the police to see but not talk to 68 people at the police headquarters. Police said they were refugees from Carrascalao's home and from the home of his eldest son, Joseph.

Access to the hospital was strictly controlled by police. Police also toured several charitable establishments Saturday night and Sunday asking if they had treated any wounded people.

Lucas, a survivor of the Liquisa massacre of pro-independence supporters earlier this month, was among those missing. Last week he had told AFP: "They will come and kill us because we can testify about what happened at

Liquisa."

At least 25 people, according to church sources — 59 according to humanitarian organisations — were killed at the church at Liquisa, 40 kilometres west of Dili, by the same militiamen who later terrorised Dili.

"If they did not have the army behind them, we could confront them," said Crispin, a vendor at the Becora market. "But the army is behind them and we can do nothing against their guns."

In his Sunday sermon during a Mass at his home, Dili's Bishop Belo said: "This Easter season is not the season of joy which it should be because some people seem bent on destroying the territory."

The Nobel peace prize winner added: "But perhaps if they regain their sense of belonging to the community, we can find peace."

Irish foreign minister shocked and horrified by East Timor rampage

JAKARTA (AFP) — Irish Foreign Minister David Andrews was "horrified" by the brutal killing spree he witnessed in East Timor and plans to report what he saw to U.N. Secretary General Kofi Annan, his spokesman said Sunday.

"He was deeply shocked and horrified, and that is an understatement," the spokesman, speaking in Jakarta shortly after Andrews returned from Timor where the two witnessed the rampage in Dili.

The military says 13 people were killed when Indonesian army-backed militia attacked and killed pro-independence advocates, burning their homes.

The Indonesian National Commission of Human Rights says at least 20 were killed on Saturday when the Indonesian army and police mostly stayed in their barracks, and the uncle of one of the dead, an Indonesian government official, said as many as 30 were killed.

Immediately after their return to Jakarta on Sunday morning, Andrews telephoned Indonesian Foreign Minister Ali Alatas and gave him a detailed account of what he saw and heard.

He planned to do the same for Annan "as soon as the time zones allow a phone call" and to Indonesian President B.J. Habibie when he meets with him in Jakarta Monday morning.

Andrews will in addition brief European Union ambassadors in Jakarta on Monday afternoon, and hopes to raise the subject with the EU foreign ministers at their meeting in Brussels next week.

Speaking for Andrews, who travelled to East Timor at the request of the Irish parliament, he said "we ourselves witnessed truckloads of armed militia driving past the military commander's office while we were talking."

"They were armed to the teeth with guns and other weapons."

"One of our party who was not in the meeting was approached by a man in great

distress who said his house was under attack."

In a subsequent meeting with Nobel laureate Dili Bishop Carlos Ximenes Belo, refugees "in great distress" came to the house, he said.

Saturday's attacks and intimidation of those in favour of independence for the former Portuguese colony invaded by Indonesia in 1975, came ahead of a planned U.N.-supervised vote on independence, scheduled for July.

The Indonesian government has said it will let the territory go if the results of the opinion poll favour independence over an offer from Jakarta of broad autonomy.

Early elections likely in Japan

TOKYO (AFP) — Japan's ruling and opposition party leaders said Sunday Prime Minister Keizo Obuchi might call general elections in a few months to consolidate his improving power base.

An opinion poll, released Sunday by the news agency Jiji Press, showed support for Obuchi's government rose to 33 per cent in April from nearly 30 per cent in March. The disapproval rate fell to nearly 36 per cent from 42 per cent.

Junichiro Koizumi, a former health and welfare minister of the ruling Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), said Obuchi could dissolve the lower house for early elections after the current session of parliament ends in mid-June.

"The dissolution can be one of the options for

Obuchi to explore the possibility of his reelection as party chief," said Koizumi, one of Obuchi's intramural rivals, in a television interview. "I cannot reject the idea as reckless altogether."

"It can happen in July or August," said Naoto Kan, the head of the main opposition Democratic Party, in another TV programme.

Kan said his party would launch "basic preparations" for snap elections by choosing about 80 per cent of candidates for the 300 single-seat constituencies by the end of May.

Obuchi's allies are seeking to suppress challenges to his leadership within the ruling party by extending his term as LDP chief or bringing forward the election date for the post.

He took over as premier and LDP president last July after his predecessor Ryutaro Hashimoto quit in the face of a humiliating setback in upper house elections.

Obuchi had been expected to serve the remainder of Hashimoto's two-year term as party chief, which ends in September. Hashimoto and Obuchi belonged to the biggest LDP faction led by powerful former prime minister Noboru Takeshita.

Chief Cabinet Secretary Hiromu Nonaka earlier said the LDP should move up the battle for the party leadership or change its rules to let Obuchi serve a full two-year term.

Koizumi, Obuchi's rival, said if the battle for the intra-mural race can-

not be brought forward, the premier might call early general elections to boost his power base.

If the LDP wins in the snap polls, Obuchi will be chosen uncontested as party chief, said Koizumi. "But it is going to be a big gamble because, if he loses, he has to step down."

The LDP, which has lost its majority in the upper house, still dominates the lower house whose current four-year term is due to expire in October 2000.

The Jiji opinion poll said Obuchi's approval rating had improved as Japan's economy appeared to be bottoming out from its worst recession after World War II.

It was conducted on 2,000 eligible voters, of whom 72 per cent gave valid answers.

Sierra Leone rebel leader in U.N. custody

FREETOWN (R) — Sierra Leone's jailed rebel leader Foday Sankoh has been transferred from prison to United Nations custody ahead of his trip to Togo later on Sunday for consultations with his followers, diplomats said.

They said Sankoh was moved from Freetown to the capital's Lungi airport on Saturday night. Lungi is under the control of a Nigerian-led ECOMOG peacekeeping force protecting the Sierra Leone government.

"Everything is now ready for Sankoh to travel," a U.N. diplomat told Reuters.

Sankoh had been held in jail while appealing

against a death sentence for treason and crimes against humanity.

Sankoh's talks with his guerrilla commanders in the northern Togolese town of Kara are seen as the most crucial step in efforts to end a prolonged conflict in Sierra Leone.

The meeting could lead to wider peace talks to end a civil war in the former British colony that first started in 1991.

On Saturday the United Nations lifted a travel ban on Sankoh's top guerrillas, who are under sanctions for their reign of terror in Sierra Leone, state radio in Freetown said on Sunday.

It quoted a statement by the U.N. observer mission in Sierra Leone as

saying that U.N. officials would accompany Sankoh to Togo and would pick up his lieutenants somewhere between the borders of Liberia and Guinea.

Rebel sources in other west African capitals said the guerrillas were likely to be picked up in Monrovia, Liberia, and may already have gathered there from their jungle hideouts.

Government sources

said the guerrillas had been forced to slash their delegation from nearly 50 to 14 following pressure from Sierra Leone President Ahmad Tejan Kabbah.

The list of the guerrilla envoys was not immediately available but officials of Sankoh's Revolutionary United Front said it would certainly include rebel field Commander Sam Bockarie.

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Many ways to mark Earth Day

THERE ARE many ways to celebrate Earth Day which falls on Monday. The U.S. embassy has given us a vivid example of how we in Jordan may commemorate the occasion in a significant way. The embassy's celebration will be dedicated to the water issue attempting to promote awareness of the crisis and how we may all conserve water in the wake of a painful and difficult drought season.

The U.S. mission has also demonstrated how Jordanians can develop new sources for water by collecting rainfall as scarce as it may be. It is little known that the architects who designed the embassy had huge reservoirs of water built under the building to be filled with rainwater during winter. The practice dates back to Roman times. The simple method could at least provide households with enough water to water gardens and wash cars.

Addressing the water crisis is only one way to mark the occasion. We have so many other environment-related problems that need to be addressed. It is no secret that we, like many others in Third World countries, are not environment-friendly people. The late King Hussein's last words to the country were full of references to environment and what we should be doing to preserve our precious ecosystem. Our cars still emit dangerous fumes including lead and sulphuric acid from the kind of gasoline we still use. Our factories are damaging the atmosphere all around them. People still smoke in public buildings despite a law that bans this act. Fruits and vegetables still feed on highly polluted water and remain without the close scrutiny of the ministries of health and agriculture. Uncontrolled use of insecticides is still the order of the day for our farmers. Water quality is far below international standards.

We have many reasons to celebrate Earth Day.

Yet without a clear will to take this occasion seriously, no amount of celebration is going to succeed in creating a culture for the protection of our natural resources and our environment. The heavily polluted water that was pumped to our homes last summer may have stirred in us a temporary sense of urgency, but only a transient awareness of the dangers that may lay ahead. Unless we have a sustained campaign to educate ourselves about the real lessons of Earth Day, it will not be long before we face an environmental catastrophe.

ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES

Al Ra'i's Fahed Fanek quoted the Chief Editor of the London-based Al Quds Al Arabi newspaper Abdul Bari Atwan who wrote that Jordan's political and social stability is a regional and international objective. It is in no one's interest, including Israel, to harm the Kingdom's stability because of its strategic position, said Fanek. Although this should reassure Jordanians and enable them to play a significant role in the region, the country's real stability depends on positive developments in the economic situation, noted Fanek, who asked: Will the parties concerned about Jordan's stability be able to provide anything in this regard? Fanek once again quoted Atwan as reporting that the U.S. is not only to provide assistance to the Kingdom, but will also encourage other countries and international organisations to do the same. The idea of including Jordan in the Gulf Cooperation Council, which could eliminate unemployment, poverty, and deficit, is not "baseless" and might be implemented soon in one way or another, according to the writer.

Al Ra'i's Mahmoud Rimawi said the Arab parties in Israel have failed to organise themselves to launch a serious challenge for the Knesset elections, because four of the groups decided to run. They also failed to agree on whether they should nominate Azmi Bishara, an Arab academic politician as the prime ministerial candidate, added Rimawi, who said Bishara managed to obtain 50,000 signatures from Arab citizens to meet the election conditions. In addition, the parties failed to deal with the issue of competing Muslim and Christian claims to a piece of land in Nazareth, said the writer. It was notable that political bodies, such as the Nazareth Municipality, are asking the Israeli authorities to solve the issue instead of doing so by themselves. Muslims say the land is an Islamic Waqf, and they want to build a mosque there, while the municipality says the land is public property, and it wants to construct a car park as part of preparations for the millennium. Then, at the same time as engaging in such squabbles, they annually celebrate Palestine Day together, said the writer.

Jordan twenty years from now

WHERE DO you see Jordan twenty years from now? This is a legitimate question that continues to puzzle analysts as well as laymen because presently there is no economic charter in which a nationally shared vision is stipulated.

Yet, utilising a simple development model (and I use the word "simple" because some of these models verge on being bizarre) presented in Michael Porter's book, The Competitive Advantage of Nations, it is possible, to determine Jordan's present and future stages of development, and thus be able to strategically predict where the nation is heading.

Basically, Jordan is in the factor-driven stage of development, an initial stage describing a state of an economy where all the internationally successful industries in the nation base their advantage on the low cost of the basic factors of production. Competition among firms is mainly in price since there is little value added and, as a result, market entry is easy, and competition is effortlessly subdued through the formation of cartels and the growth of monopolies. Technology is either sourced

or inexpensive due to it being outdated. Exports are comprised primarily of commodities with few of the firms having direct access to end users worldwide. Domestic demand is weak and unsophisticated or simply non-existent and is therefore unimportant for driving the economy.

This economy, as in the case of Jordan, is sensitive to regional and global fluctuations. It is a price-taker in trade, following the dictates of the international prices of commodities, which makes it difficult to predict where the economy will be in one or two decades. But, the good news is that virtually all economies go through this stage of being factor driven.

To move to the next stage to become an investment-driven economy, the factors must be made more advanced and specialised through better training of workers and improved infrastructure; entrepreneurs and firms should be motivated further to do well and compete intensely instead of rent seeking; and demand is enhanced as wages increase and tastes for better products are acquired through dynamic advertising and higher product

standards by competitors and government.

In this stage, there needs to be a national consensus favouring investment and economic growth. Political decisions must maintain a long run vision while encouraging people to obtain foreign technology and take risks while the government channels scarce capital to particular industries. The stability of the government, and having little or no red tape and no cronyism with a government that is strong enough to counter special interest groups will help the economy develop through this stage and into the next.

The third stage is the innovation stage where the economy has a wide range of developed industries with vigorous domestic rivalry and leadership, whether through technology appropriation or development, and a tremendous capacity to innovate. This type of economy is also characterised by a higher service component of the national economy than in the earlier stages. It is more resistant to exogenous effects such as regional developments, and less susceptible to macroeconomic downturns as industries adjust easily to

Economic Review



Dr. Yusuf Mansur

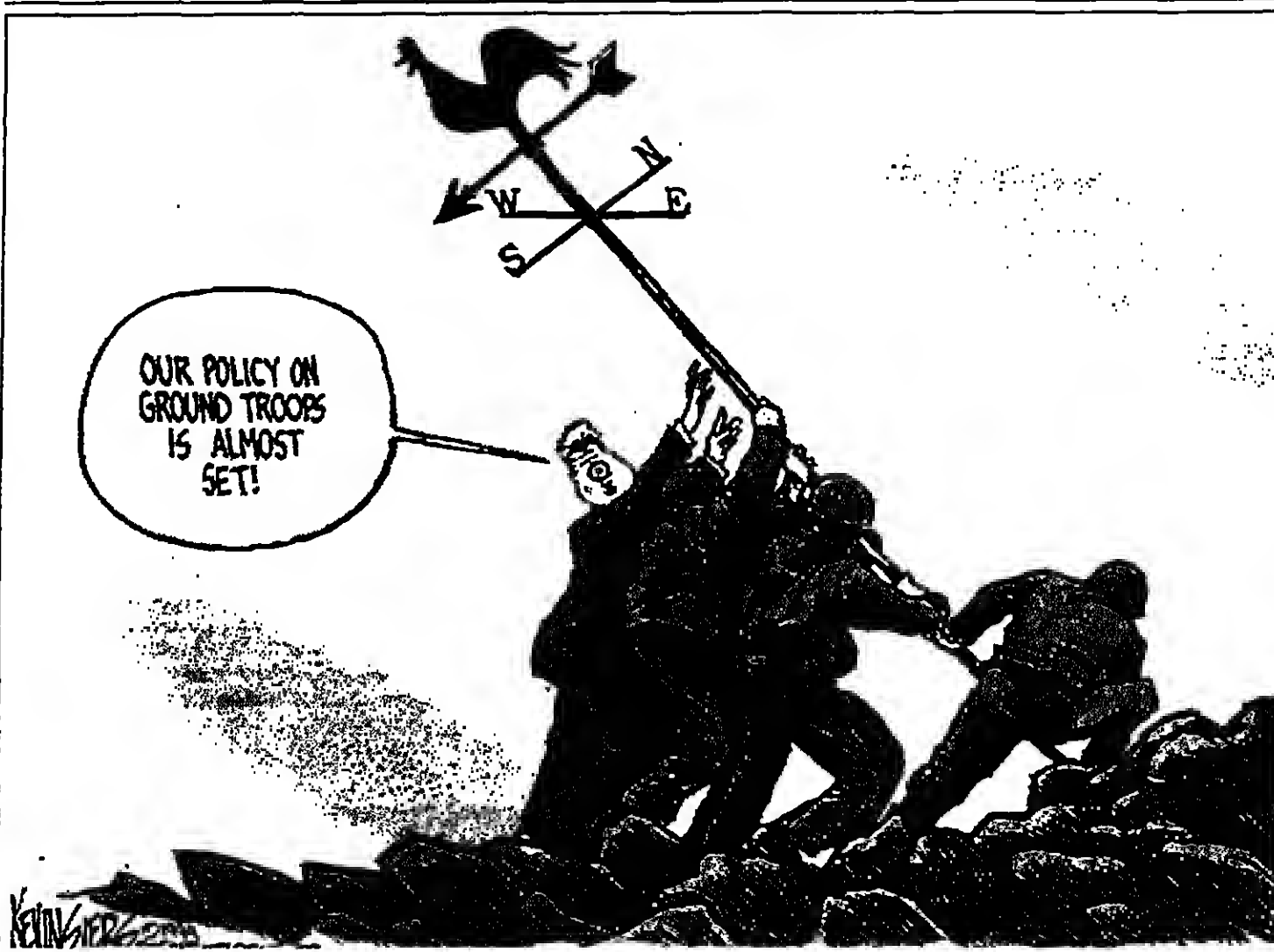
supply shocks and cost pushes. The government role is at best described as indirect where any protection it has expressed in the other stages is lifted and effort is still expended on the development of more advanced and specialised factors to match the growth in the economy.

The final stage is known as the wealth driven stage in which the economy witnesses a decline as it becomes unable to sustain its achievements as motivations change and become subdued. One possible solution to counter this decline has been found in the

information technology revolution where the combination of computer and telephone or communications devices has made the information technology medium a highly competitive, fast improving, efficiency enhancing medium with the rules of the game constantly changing. This is perhaps why the U.S., the world leader in information technology, has witnessed such a long period (seven years) of continuous economic growth while the rest of the world remained subject to traditional business cycles.

Accordingly, where is Jordan in all this? It is firmly in the factor-driven stage. To move to the next stage, the factors have to improve, technology must be brought in and employed, protection where necessary must be offered — on condition that the protection is temporary and will surely be removed, which is very difficult to do unless cabinets serve longer and, at least, for specific periods that are well known in advance — and investment is truthfully encouraged.

So where do you see Jordan twenty years from now? It depends.



What is wrong in the Balkans?

By Gwynne Dyer

"THERE WERE 20 people underground, hiding in the cellar. There were only women and children," said the boy. "They first burnt a car on the road near the house and then they came inside, howling like wolves. They were local Serbs, they were not wearing ski masks."

The boy's name is Dren Caka; he is ten years old. "First, they shot a girl, she was about thirteen, with a machine-gun. They shot them one by one, in the head and in the back. I was near the door, and when they shot at me I threw myself down on the ground as if I was dead." Eventually the wounded boy escaped from the burning house, found an aunt, and fled with her to Albania — but he left his mother and three sisters behind, dead in the deserted city of Djakovica in western Kosovo.

"Houses and whole villages reduced to ashes, unarmed and innocent populations massacred... acts of violence, pillage and brutality... such were the means employed by the Serbo-Montenegrin soldiery with a view to the entire transformation of the ethnic character of regions inhabited exclusively by Albanians," says the official report, and it certainly sums up the horrors of Kosovo. Except that the official report quoted is the Carnegie Report on the Balkan Wars of 1912 and 1913, whereas Dren Caka's ordeal was last week.

Why are the ethnic hatreds in the Balkans so deep, so ancient, so uniquely fierce and strong that the passage of eighty years changes nothing? And very much to the point at the moment, when NATO countries are moving towards a decision to commit ground troops to drive the Serbs out of Kosovo and bring the refugees home, what's the use of intervening if they're all doomed to spend the rest of history at each other's throats anyway?

They aren't. The whole thing is lies. Inter-ethnic relations in the Balkans have not been dramatically worse than elsewhere in Europe during this century.

Except for the decade of the '90s, indeed, the Balkans were not the part of Europe you thought about first when the subject of genocide came up. Germany was, followed (or even preceded, in terms of sheer numbers of people killed) by the Soviet Union. And even when it came to older, less bureaucratic forms of ethnic and religious hatred, places like Ireland and the Basque country came in well ahead of the Balkans.

So where did this notion of inevitable, irre-

pressible ethnic violence in the Balkans come from? History does have a bearing here, because this is the part of Europe where Islam and two bitterly hostile forms of Christianity, meet. Catholic Croats loathe Orthodox Serbs, who duly despise them back — and everybody hates the Muslims.

That is history's poisoned gift to the present, for most of the Balkans belonged to the Ottoman empire until eighty years ago. Through six centuries of Ottoman rule, the ruling Turks naturally favoured local Muslim populations, and savagely punished Christian communities that dared to rebel. Now the shoe is on the other foot, and some Christians in the Balkans don't really believe that their Muslim neighbours have any right to be there. Except that there weren't really THAT many people who thought like that. In the old, pre-Milosevic Yugoslavia, people got along pretty well, really. In Sarajevo, the country's most ethnically mixed city, most of the younger generation deliberately called themselves "Yugoslav" as a way of leaving the old ethnic and religious labels behind.

Throughout that old Yugoslavia, the different ethnic and religious groups worked and played together, they moved freely from one republic to another, they even intermarried in large numbers. What little tension you did see in a thoroughly secular society was mostly between Serbs and Croats, not Christians and Muslims.

To resurrect the old stereotypes in the laid-back Yugoslavia of the early 80s, let alone persuade people to kill one another over them, would have taken a genius. It is the great tragedy of the Balkans that in Slobodan Milosevic, it found that genius.

The Serbian strongman bears a very large personal responsibility for the South Slav tragedy of the 90s, for his main technique for gaining and keeping power is to stir up ethnic grievances and stimulate crises.

In the Serbs, whose style of nationalism has always cast them as the misunderstood victims of wicked foreign plots, Milosevic had fairly promising raw material, but paranoia among whole populations is not caused by a biochemical imbalance. It is a condition that needs to be roused, fed, and directed against plausible targets of resentment — and in that, Milosevic is probably the leading European practitioner since Hitler.

Which leaves the question of why the West fell for Milosevic's self-serving lies and distortions, when even among the Serbs many were not fooled. (The saddest, most

admirable people in the atrocious war of ethnic cleansing that Milosevic unleashed in Bosnia in 1992-95 were the Bosnian Serbs who fought down to the end alongside their Muslim fellow-citizens to defend the ideal of a multi-national Bosnia.)

The main reason that the peoples of the West were persuaded to believe that all the 'ethnic' of the Balkans were equally vicious and equally crazy is that their own governments lied to them about it. They encouraged that belief because they didn't want to risk the political costs of a military intervention.

They needed to head off popular demand to 'do something' about the massacres that were devastating the Muslims of Bosnia (90 per cent of the refugees in Bosnia were Muslims, as were 90 per cent of those killed), so they spread lies about all sides being equally guilty.

The best documented case is 'Kenneth Roberts', the pseudonym of an employee of MI6, Britain's foreign intelligence service, who wrote articles datelined 'Sarajevo' for 'The Times' and the weekly 'Spectator' in 1994 claiming that atrocities were being carried out equally in Bosnia by all sides. But hundreds of other Western journalists wrote the same guff out of sheer ignorance and laziness, without even being paid to lie. They just went to the briefings, and passed on the spin they had been given.

So no, ethnic hatreds in the Balkans are not dramatically worse than elsewhere, or at least they were not before several hundred thousand people died and several million lost their homes in Milosevic's various wars. And even now, 'ethnic hatred' is often a cover for less complex and completely non-historical motives — like greed.

Many of the Kosovar refugees recently driven into Macedonia had phones in their houses, of course, and inevitably curiosity drives some of them to call their home numbers. Gjeragina Tuhina, a journalist working for the Institute for War and Peace Reporting who fled from Pristina last week, knows seven or eight who have tried. The conversation, she says, is always the same.

Somebody answers the phone in Serbian. The expellee asks: "Is this the house of (what-ever the family's name is)?" And the Serbian-speaker replies: "I don't know whose it was before, but it's mine now."

The writer is an independent London-based journalist whose articles are published in 45 countries

Footnotes

Prostitution contravenes rights

By Waleed M. Sadi

IN AN earlier article I raised the question of whether prostitution de jure or de facto poses issues under human rights law. As pointed out, in the U.N. Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights of which I am a member, 17 out of the 18 members reject the notion that prostitution raises human rights questions. Admittedly, when I kept hammering on the point that the Committee should quiz states where prostitution is legalised or exists de facto on whether such a phenomenon violates the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ESCR), I did so on the basis of the Covenant itself. It was clear in my mind, prostitution per se violates economic, social and cultural rights in one way or another. Little did I or my colleagues know that there is a Convention on this very subject. It is the Convention for the Suppression of the Traffic in persons and the Exploitation of the Prostitution of Others that came into force on July 25, 1951.

The Convention deals the traffic in persons for the purpose of prostitution as incompatible with the dignity and worth of the human person, and which endangers the welfare of the individual, the family and the community, propositions that clearly fall under the Covenant on ESCR.

The Convention also records that the trafficking of women and children violate (1) the International Agreement of May 18, 1904 against trafficking in white slavery, (2) the International Convention of May 4, 1910 on the same subject, (3) the International Convention of September 30, 1921 against trafficking in women and children, and (4) the International Convention of 1933 against trafficking in adult women.

The crunch lines in the Convention of 1951 are contained in Article 1 where it is stipulated that state parties agree to punish any person who, to gratify the passions of another (1) procures, entices or leads away, for the purpose of prostitution, another person, even with the consent of that person; (2) exploits the prostitution of another person, even with the consent of that person.

Article 2 states that parties agree to punish any person who (1) keeps or manages, or knowingly finances or takes part in the financing of a brothel.

For the countries which have legalised prostitution or tolerate it, this Convention, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights make good and appropriate reading. It is being said that we in Jordan have a flourishing business of prostitution. Observers maintain that poverty has driven women into prostitution. Others put the blame on the fact that we are fast developing into a 'modern' society. Whatever the reasons, the government is called upon to honour its treaty obligations, not to mention our moral and religious values and stem the tide of prostitution before it reaches new heights and dimensions and turn into organised crime. Probably no one will take this admonition seriously, again on the pretext that prostitution is the oldest trade in the world, and that there is no effective way to prevent it short of coming up with a pill that works in the opposite way to Viagra!

Features

Jordan Times, Monday, April 19, 1999

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Oracles, empires and early Islamic intrigues: Eight centuries of ancient history at Humayma in south Jordan — part I

(Note: This is the first of three articles on the excavations and surveys at Humayma in south Jordan. Today's article explores the earliest Nabataean town, while the second article next week describes the Roman town and the third article will look at the Byzantine and Islamic era settlements.)

ONE OF the undiscovered treasures of Jordan's antiquities is the ancient townsite of Humayma, in south-west Jordan, below the Ras en-Naqh plateau, and now more easily accessible thanks to a paved road from the Aqaba-Ma'an highway.

Located in a beautiful, remote, desert landscape amidst mountains and plateaus, historically this is also a most significant site: it includes one of the earliest known Nabataean towns, a tale of a Nabataean king following the orders of an oracle, the longest known Nabataean ceramic water pipeline, the earliest known Roman fort in Jordan, and a rare local Abbasid era mosque and palatial home, and it was the crucible of the Abbasid family revolt against the early Islamic Umayyad dynasty in Damascus.

Humayma's ancient history, architecture, and impressive exploitation of local natural resources are all better known today, following six seasons of excavations and surveys by a Canadian-led multinational team headed by Dr. John Oleson, professor in the Department of Greek and Roman Studies at the University of Victoria (Victoria, British Columbia, Canada).

Co-directors of the work are Dr. Khairiyeh 'Amr of the Jordanian Department of Antiquities, Dr. Robert Schick (Albright Institute, Jerusalem), and Rebecca Foote of Harvard University.

The work is conducted in cooperation with the Jordanian Department of Antiquities, with logistical support provided by the American Centre of Oriental Research (ACOR) in Amman. The principal funder for the project has been the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada and the University of Victoria, with additional funding from the Max van Berchem Foundation (Geneva, Switzerland), the Taggart Foundation (New York, U.S.), and the Jordanian Department of Antiquities.

The modern study of Humayma started with a series of site and regional surveys in the 1980s, followed by six excavation seasons that have revealed the remains of a settlement that lasted for some 800 years — during the Nabataean, Roman, Byzantine and early Islamic eras.

The Nabataeans probably knew the town by the name of Hawar; in Roman and Byzantine times its name changed to Auara (also referred to in ancient texts as Hawara, Hawarra, and Hauanael). The name Humayma was first used in the early Islamic period.

Humayma is fascinating because it reveals a combination of imperial and local cultures, without interruption over eight centuries of time. Visible



One of the large Nabataean water reservoirs, with the stone-built inlet pipe in foreground (photo by Rami G. Khouri)

here are the symbols of flourishing regional kingdoms and foreign imperial domination, as well as the simple lives of ordinary local people who seem to have accommodated themselves rather well to whomever happened to be in political control during their lifetimes.

"We have nice insights into how ordinary people in Humayma lived during the eight centuries of the site's use, and we see that political and religious symbols changed while people's identities, culture, and daily routines changed much more slowly," Oleson said. "One thing was clear throughout all this time, though," he added, "the people always paid attention to their water supply system and maintained it in good working order."

King Aretas' oracle

The site was first settled around 80 BC when the Nabataean King Aretas III founded a town there — partly in response to an oracle he consulted, but also presumably to settle the local nomadic population and maintain control of the strategic route in the south between Petra and Aqaba. His construction of a massive water conduit and storage reservoir must have been a key attraction for Nabataean nomads or villagers to settle there. Aretas III may have established this and other Nabataean towns — aiming at sedentarisation of the nomadic *bedouin* — as a response to the shift of global trade routes to the Suez area, instead of through Petra. Oleson said in a recent interview in Amman.

Nabataean bones were identified and excavated for the first time in 1995-96, including 1st and 2nd century AD stone and mudbrick houses with wall frescoes in some cases. The most recent work indicates that much of the earliest Nabataean settlement (built largely of mudbricks) is preserved less than half a metre below the surface.

The initial excavations in 1991-95 focused on the town centre, specifically examining the Nabataean necropo-

lis, a 2nd-to-3rd century AD house, the Roman fort, four Byzantine churches, several early Islamic houses, and the qasr (palatial residence) and mosque of the Abbasid family. In 1996 and 1998, the team examined a possible Nabataean camping area, domestic structures from the 1st-2nd centuries AD, the interior of the Roman fort, the Abbasid qasr, and a nearby military watchtower. They again identified structures and occupational phases from the early Nabataean through the Abbasid periods, whose wide range of facilities included evidence of nomadic occupation along with structures used for domestic, military, religious, and hydraulic purposes.

The first Nabataean town

In several parts of the site, much Early and Middle Nabataean pottery was recovered, but without corresponding built structures from that period. This suggests to Oleson that "the Nabataean era ceramics, including whole vessels, were deposited by indi-



A stone-roofed Nabataean cistern at the north end of Humayma (photo by John Oleson)

viduals living in tents, possibly drawing their water from an adjacent cistern." He thought the area in question may have served as a camping ground for the family that owned the cistern and that "from time to time participated in the events at Hawar or tended crops in the adjacent fields, which were well watered by the outflow of the wadi that passed through the settlement." A relatively well preserved house dating from the Middle Nabataean period, probably built of mudbricks on a stone foundation, adds to the evidence of a significant Nabataean occupation of the site in the 1st and 2nd centuries AD.

This modest structure offers a glimpse of what may have been a typical family house in a settlement that depended mainly on pastoral and agricultural activities.

The building remains an aid to meet one of the goals of the project, which has always been "to reconstruct the day-to-day activities of the people of Hawar during the Nabataean period, and the structures in which they lived," according to Oleson.

Another Nabataean structure made mostly of mudbrick was also excavated in 1996, though it also included stone door jambs, installations, and roof-support arches. It was decorated inside with a fresco painting on the mudbrick walls and the stone arches, with motifs such as vines, grape clusters, and human figures.

The extensive use of mudbricks to build houses suggests to the project team that other such Nabataean building remains may be buried in the adjacent field, despite a lack of evidence for them on the surface of the earth.

The Nabataean town flourished for a combination of reasons: its local agriculture and livestock resources, proximity to the Nabataean capital at Petra, and exploitation of its strategic location on the main north-south Roman highway from Aqaba to Petra and Bostra (today in southern Syria). This was the only major Nabataean town between Petra to the north and

the city of Hegra to the south (modern Medain Saleh, in Saudi Arabia).

Nabataean Humayma's status seems not to have changed much when the Nabataean kingdom became a client state of Rome around 64-63 BC, after the Roman General Pompey annexed the area of modern north Jordan and south Syria into the Roman Empire. The town and its people lived a relatively secure and prosperous life, thanks in part to an impressive



By Rami G. Khouri



A Nabataean dam in the Jabal Qalkha area, one of many such facilities that fed into Humayma's regional water collection system (photo by John Oleson)

water system that provided for the needs of the people, the herds of animals, and crops irrigation.

Masterful water system

The water system documented at and around Humayma is perhaps its most impressive single element. It was initially built in the Nabataean period, but was consistently maintained and used in all other succeeding eras (until today, when some cisterns are still used by local *bedouin* livestock and farmers).

The Nabataean water system comprised the longest Nabataean water channel ever documented — a total 27 kilometres long. It brought water to a large reservoir at the settlement from the springs of 'Ain Ghana, 'Ain Jamman, and 'Ain esh-Sbarah, in the nearby Ras en-Naqh hills to the north, 19 kilometres from Humayma as the crow flies. The roofed channel was made of stone conduit blocks arranged end-to-end.

Another reservoir with a capacity of 1273 cubic metres was later built inside the Roman fort. The town had 16 other, sometimes roofed, public reservoirs and private cisterns, and another 41 cisterns were located in the surrounding plain and foothills, along with dams, wadi barriers, and run-off fields. Oleson has calculated that the entire water conveyance and storage system could have made available to the population a maximum of 9050 cubic metres of water, with some 4284

cubic metres of water stored within the town itself. This would have supported a maximum population of just over 725 people, and less if some of the water was used for animals and irrigation.

Water flowed in the long stone channel at a rate of some 6.2 cubic metres per hour, feeding the reservoirs in and around the town. Along its entire route the channel dropped from 1425 to 955 metres above sea level; its average slope was 2.45 per cent, but the actual slope varied from one to 45 per cent en route.

Several facilities built along the route of the channel allowed access to the water; these included a cistern-like box and a circular stone structure with a central tank, a large open cistern, and another circular stone structure. When one branch of the system seemed to have suffered sedimentation problems, these were resolved by building at least five settling tanks.

The survey of an area of 125 square kilometres around the settlement identified an extensive regional water system that saw ancient Auara reach out further into its countryside to get its water than any other Nabataean settlement. Oleson said. The water system comprised a total of 61 different sites and facilities, including the long aqueduct, four springs, 51 cisterns (of which 14 were roofed with typical Nabataean stone slabs carried on arches), a dam, two wadi barriers, six artificial terraces and stone piles, and several cleared fields and miscellaneous facilities.

Doctors enthuse over new breast cancer drugs

By Maggie Fox
Reuters

JUST A year after the breast cancer drug tamoxifen was found to protect even healthy women against breast cancer, a new generation of drugs now being tested may do even better, doctors say.

They are enthusiastic about studies that show an improved version of tamoxifen can stop breast cancer tumours in mice. A second drug that takes a completely different approach has been found to shrink breast cancer tumours in mice when used with tamoxifen much more than tamoxifen alone.

"We're all just salivating," Donald Von Hoff, a cancer researcher in San Antonio and the newly elected president of the American Association for Cancer Research (AACR), told Reuters in an interview.

But he said the drugs are a long way from being used to prevent breast cancer, although they have the potential.

"You've got to get a good safety record first," he said.

That means testing the drugs — Zeneca's faslodex and Ligand Pharmaceuticals' targretin — first in patients whose breast cancer has come back despite treatment with tamoxifen.

Von Hoff says if targretin and faslodex work in such patients, they will probably also work to prevent breast cancer in women who have a high risk of the disease.

"When you see activity in a patient (whose cancer has spread), that is

very incredible," Von Hoff said. "It means it will be so much more effective in an early situation." Most patients who take tamoxifen eventually develop tumours that resist the drug, so a big priority is to find drugs that can step in and help when it fails.

Faslodex, known as a "pure oestrogen antagonist," has very strong effects in mice, Kent Osborne of the M.D. Anderson Cancer Centre in Houston, Texas, told the AACR.

"I really believe that these pure antagonists can actually cure cancer of the breast in these models," Osborne told the opening session of the meeting.

Tamoxifen, made by British drug giant Zeneca under the name Nolvadex, cannot only treat breast cancer but has been shown to reduce the risk of breast cancer by 49 per cent when used by healthy women at high risk of breast cancer.

It acts against oestrogen sometimes, blocking its bad effects on cancer cells, yet stimulates the hormone's effects when they are positive, keeping an ageing woman's bones strong.

But it is not perfect, as it can also stimulate the hormone's effects on the ovaries and thus increase the risk of rare ovarian cancer.

Another drug, raloxifene, is marketed to prevent osteoporosis but has similar effects to tamoxifen. Sold by Eli Lilly and Co. under the name Evista, it may also prevent cancer.

U.S. government and academic researchers are currently testing tamoxifen and raloxifene head-to-head against one another in a big trial.

Faslodex is in phase III clinical trials, meaning it is being tested in humans to see if it works, against advanced breast cancer that has become resistant to tamoxifen.

"We only have minimal information right now on faslodex in people," Osborne said in an interview.

"But in the lab ... it's better than other forms of endocrine (hormonal) therapy that we've seen so far. In maybe 20 per cent of mice treated with that drug, the tumour never comes back. Even when you biopsy the area where the tumour was, you don't see viable tumour cells," he said.

The effects are far more dramatic than other current treatments for breast cancer.

"It's a very subtle improvement but it's important," Judah Folkman, one of the country's most respected cancer researchers, told a news briefing.

Targretin takes a different approach. It affects so-called retinoid receptors on cells, which are important for controlling cells. It does not seem to affect hormones.

When targretin is given along with tamoxifen to mice infected with breast cancer, the combination shrinks 94 per cent of tumours, Eric Bischoff, a scientist at Ligand, told the AACR.

That compares to 33 per cent of tumours in mice treated with tamoxifen only. The company has started phase II clinical trials in people to determine whether the drug is safe and hopes to release its first findings later this year.

No Viagra? Try dried lizard

By Cynthia Johnston
Reuters

TWO YEARS ago doctors told Abdul-lah Asran that his infant son, stricken with a blood disorder, might never fully recover. Asran knew better.

He treated his child with the oil made from black caraway seeds, said to be a cure for all ailments, and prayed.

"I gave him a spoonful of habbat al-baraka and a spoonful of honey every morning without the doctor's knowledge," Asran said.

"After a week, he became very strong with the help of God." Deep in the narrow alleyways of Islamic Cairo, dozens of traditional herbalists offer natural cures for diabetes and infertility in addition to everyday ailments. Signs in the backs of shops boast herbs to help customers gain weight, lose weight, combat hair loss, relieve headaches and soothe nerves.

Nearly all have a barrel of habbat al-baraka, the little black seed, placed strategically in front of their shops.

"The people here like to get its oil because it is scientifically proven that it contains many elements that improve our immunity," said Ahmed Gomaa Khidir, a 37-year-old third generation herbalist.

Experts say herbal treatments have enjoyed renewed popularity in Egypt in the past few years, and habbat al-baraka is leading the pack.

Street kiosks in central Cairo hawk pamphlets with titles like "herbs and women" and "herbs and sex." One renowned Egyptian biologist has endorsed herbal cures, within limits, on his weekly television programme.

Experts say the renewed popularity of herbal medicine in Cairo has coincided with an Islamic revival. For

pious Muslims who avoid stimulants such as coffee and tea, herbal medicine provides a religiously correct alternative.

"The people who practice herbal medicine tend to have beards. They are very much into religion," said Madhiha Al Safy, a sociology professor at the American University in Cairo.

Habbat al-baraka, Khidir says, was prescribed by the Prophet Mohammad himself.

"It comes from Islam. There is a Hadith," he said, referring to a saying of the prophet. "The black seed is a treatment for everything except death." Safy said it was difficult to know whether the hadith had any validity.

"People always quote a Hadith to support what they're doing," she said. "But there's no harm in using habbat al-baraka." Pharmacologist Abdul Rahman Al Naggar disagrees, although he occasionally prescribes the herb to treat asthma.

"Our Prophet Mohammad was not a medical person," he said.

"People who go (to herbalists) are either ignorant or have tried everything in modern medicine with no cure."

Although imported herbs from India were once very popular, attention is now turning to herbs grown at home.

In the 1940s, when Egypt was still under British influence, Khidir's grandfather used opium and marijuana in herbal mixtures.

Spices from abroad were plentiful and cheap.

That changed with stringent drug laws and the drying up of sources of rare medicinal herbs.

"I wish people used herbs as we used them in the past," said one elderly customer, dressed in a traditional black cloak and headscarf. "If you have a disease, you have to eat some herbs. I don't use chemical medicines." Yet some potent cures remain. Khidir says, pulling out a plastic bag of dried reptiles. A lizard, he says, is the secret ingredient in one mixture that elderly customers take to ward off winter chills.

But that's not all it does. "It strengthens you," he said, blushing. "It is a substitute for Viagra." Oil pressed from the skin of a non-poisonous snake can be rubbed on the joints to treat rheumatism and back pain.

"It is not very popular," he said. "People are afraid of it." Although Khidir offers some exclusively male treatments, like those for hair loss, many are targeted at women.

A fenugreek tea will help women to breast-feed. A stringy root called mughat promotes recovery from childbirth. A cinnamon drink is supposed to induce abortion.

Safy said the vogue for herbal cures is partly economic. Doctors are expensive. A small bottle of habbat al-baraka costs only 2.5 pounds (\$0.75).

"If something goes wrong, it is the husband and children who go to the doctor," she said. "Priority goes to the other members of the family." Government clinics are supposed to provide affordable medical care, but Safy said some Egyptian women might feel more comfortable going to a herbalist, just as they might resort to the services of a traditional midwife.

"It's just that this has been the culture. Women treat themselves at home," she said.

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Players and officials of Saudi Arabia's Al Ittihad soccer team pose for photographers as they hold the Asian Cup Winners' Cup trophy after the awarding ceremony in Tokyo. Al Ittihad beat South Korea's Chunnam Dragons by 3-2 in extra time to win the 9th Asian Cup Winners' Cup (AFP photo)

Saudis win 3rd straight Asian Cup Winners Cup

TOKYO (AFP) — Forward Ahmed Bahja struck home a golden goal to power Al Ittihad to a 3-2 win over South Korea's Chunnam Dragons here Sunday, bringing Saudi Arabia their third straight Asian Cup Winners' Cup.

Bahja opened the scoring on a penalty in the ninth minute, but Roh Sang Rae headed home an equaliser four minutes later on a corner from Kim Jung-Hook.

Chunnam went down to 10 men in the 37th minute when Maciel Luiz Franco was sent off.

They slumped further in the 57th minute when they assigned defender Joo Yeong-Ho to mind the net after first-choice goalkeeper Park Jong-Mun and his replacement Park Chul Woo were injured.

But Roh put the South Koreans ahead 2-1

in the 71st minute when his right foot sank a penalty past Saudi goalkeeper Hussain Al Sadig.

Mohammed Al Hawsawi levelled the score in the 83rd minute when he kicked in a loose ball after Khalid Al-Shomran's cross was intercepted.

The Saudi side got a penalty 14 minutes into extra-time. Bahja's kick was deflected by Joo, but the Saudi forward booted the ball back into the net.

Saudi Arabia have won the cup in the past two years through Al Hilal and Al Nasser.

In the play-off for third spot, Japan's Kashima Antlers beat Al Talaba of Iraq 1-0 with Tomoyuki Hirase scoring the only goal in the 42nd minute.

Mantilla wins Barcelona Open

BARCELONA (AP) — Barcelona native Felix Mantilla dominated in three straight sets to beat Moroccan Karim Alami to win the \$950,000 Open Seat Conde de Godo Sunday 7-6 (7-2), 6-3, 6-3.

Mantilla played the same consistent and strong game he had throughout the tournament in which he lost just one set.

The unseeded Alami's opening return of the match was a drop shot that failed to fool 10th-seed Mantilla, setting the tone of the 2 hour and 16 minute match.

"For me this is a dream come true," the Spaniard said after the match that earned him \$135,000. "To win in front of friends and family makes it the happiest day of my career, and their support gave me wings."

Alami fought back from a 4-0 deficit to take a 6-5 lead in the first set using the same powerful serve and net game that had prevailed over Todd Martin of the United States in Saturday's semifinals.

Mantilla won the tiebreaker 7-2.

"After I won the first set with the tie-break, I was a little more relaxed," said Mantilla who came into the tournament ranked 19th in the world. "He's an attacker and when he was playing aggressively he put a lot of pressure on me."

In the second set they played even until Mantilla broke Alami's serve in the eighth game to go 5-3 up, and from then on it was all Mantilla.

"I wasn't serving well which is the key to my game," said Alami following the match. Mantilla had a first serve percentage of 57 but Alami could only manage 45.

Mantilla managed to neutralise the Moroccan's strong net game with some stinging passing shots and keeping him playing long volleys until the mistakes came.

"He plays a base line game and I don't like to play like that," said Alami who is currently ranked 83rd in the world although he is likely to move up to within the top 50.

"I was a little tired and couldn't quite get the speed and aggressive play that I needed... I was able to play 10 aggressive minutes at a time but couldn't keep it up," he added.

Thumbs-up for Moya in Monte Carlo Open

MONTE CARLO (AFP)

— Top seed Carlos Moya will hope that an infected thumb which may have partially contributed to his downfall this week at home in Spain has healed enough to allow him to defend his title at the \$2.45 million Monte Carlo Open starting Monday.

Moya went out Friday in the quarter-finals at the Barcelona Open to compatriot Felix Mantilla on a day when the field played two matches due to a washout 24 hours earlier.

A year ago here, the World No. 2 claimed the first leg of a prestige clay-court double, beating Frenchman Cedric Pioline in the Monte Carlo final, then going on to win the French Open.

Moya had a brief taste of World No. 1 status in March, when he surpassed Pete Sampras for a fortnight in the ATP Tour rankings by reaching the semifinals in Indian Wells, California. But Sampras, out of this week's first major of the European clay season with back strain, got it back despite not having advanced past the quarter-finals in any of the handful of events he's played this disappointing year.

Sampras is back in America suffering through another dismal start to his French Open preparation.

He had to withdraw from the Barcelona Open when he strained a back muscle in doubles with Britain's Tim Henman, seeded third in Monte Carlo.

Sampras is hoping to be fit for the Italian Open in three weeks, which will give him only two tournaments before arriving in Paris to contest the single Grand Slam he's never won.

Injury claimed fourth seed Todd Martin, who withdrew Sunday, leaving his seeding place blank and thus giving Pioline a number 17 standing.

The Frenchman couldn't have asked for a more challenging first-round opening Monday — he plays three-time finalist and wildcard entry Boris Becker, making his farewell tour in tennis before this summer's planned retirement.

Seeded second is Yevgeny Kafelnikov, the Russian who missed a chance in February to take number one spot from Sampras.

Moya trails Sampras by just 172 points in the rankings, but the Spaniard must defend his winner's swag from 1998 on his favoured red clay.

In this last year before obligatory participation in all Mercedes Super 9 Tour tournaments from 2000, the field at the site overlooking the Mediterranean is strong — every player who enjoys the tax-free lifestyle of the principality is all but required to play in the event if eligible.



German player Nicolas Kiefer holds up a trophy during an awarding ceremony for the men's singles title at the Japan Open tennis tournament in Tokyo. It was Kiefer's second career title (AFP photo)

Kiefer beats Ferreira to win Japan Open

TOKYO (AFP) — Nicolas Kiefer captured his second career title when he powered past Wayne Ferreira of South Africa to win the men's singles final at the Japan Open tennis tournament on Sunday.

The 21-year-old German, who scored his first ATP title at Toulouse in September 1997, fought for a 7-6 (7/4), 7-5 victory in only his fourth career final.

"I was in the final in Dubai and I was in the final today. I wanted to win and I'm happy I did it. It's a great feeling," said Kiefer. "I'm here for the first time and I won the tournament. I'm very satisfied with my play today."

Ferreira hit consistently harder than Kiefer and played more aggressively, but Kiefer combined slow but accurate strokes with a sudden array of hard-hit shots.

After exchanging breaks in the second and seventh games of the first set, Ferreira hit a service return winner to come back from one mini-break in the tie-breaker to trail 4-5.

But Kiefer forced him to make forehand errors twice to take the set.

Ferreira, playing his first final in three years, changed the rhythm and the speed of his shots in the second set and again came back from service break down to even it at five-all.

But his chances of winning his first title since August 1996 were bleak as he hit a backhand shot into the net at 15-40 to go down 5-6, giving Kiefer a second chance to serve out for the match.

"I was almost out in the second round. I was down 6-3 and 3-0, but I was fighting very good. I'm very tired now, because I played a lot," said Kiefer, who had to come back from one set down to win his previous three matches.

"I think I played very good today. Wayne played very good at 7-6 and 5-4, but I served very good for the match," added Kiefer, also tying his record against Ferreira at one win against one loss.

Ferreira said: "It was pretty close. I could have won. I had a good week. I haven't had such a good week for a while. I didn't play that well at the start of the tournament, but I played great yesterday."

"My first goal was to get a final. The next one will be to win a tournament, and then the ranking takes care of itself," he added.

The victory brought Kiefer the winner's check of \$99,000 and took him close to breaking inside the top 20 for the first time in his career.

Frazier upsets Sugiyama to clinch Tokyo title

TOKYO (AFP) — Amy Frazier clinched her first WTA title in four years when she dashed local favourite Ai Sugiyama's hopes of winning a third straight victory at the Japan Open tennis tournament on Sunday.

The American hard-hitter, seeking to avenge her loss to Sugiyama in the 1997 final here, silenced a partisan crowd at the Ariake Coliseum by scoring a 6-2, 6-2 victory in the women's singles final.

"I'm very happy with the way I played today," said Frazier after winning her sixth career title and her first since a victory here in 1995.

"I enjoy playing in Japan a lot. I always enjoy this tournament, so it's such a nice feeling to win here," added the 26-year-old.

Everything went perfectly for Frazier, who changed to the net on every short ball by hitting an array of lightning approach shots.

Sugiyama however looked passive and she was rarely able to come to the net.

She made stroke errors four times in a row to lose the third game of the second set and go down 1-2.

Frazier took the following three games and, serving out for the cham-

ampionship, finished off the struggling two-time defending champion in just one hour.

"I knew I had to be aggressive. Fortunately, I didn't make too many unforced errors. I felt comfortable going for my shots, because I was confident," said Frazier, continuing her excellent results in Japan.

"I'm enjoying playing and I'm going to try to improve, keep working on my game and just play as many matches as I can," she added. Frazier staged the final here for a fifth time.

She lost to now-retired Kimiko Date in 1994 and 1996 and to Sugiyama in 1997. She scored a shock victory over former world number one Monica Seles in Tokyo in 1990.

It was a second straight win for Frazier over Sugiyama, following her first round win in the Australian Open in January. She stretched her record against the Japanese to two wins against one defeat in major tournaments.

For Sugiyama, it was a big disappointment as she had been determined to dedicate the title to her former coach, Takaaki Minowa, who died of cancer on Monday.

LOCAL SPORTS SCENE



Taekwondo gets Armenian invitation, sets agenda

AMMAN — The national taekwondo team arrived back in Amman after a successful participation in the 11th Tehran International Championship, in which Jordan achieved the third place, winning one gold, silver and three bronze medals, as well as the best team trophy. Mekhiled Assaf, member of the Jordan Taekwondo Federation, and head of the National Teams Committee, will brief the federation on Wednesday on the Kingdom's participation in the event. During the meeting, a training camp in Tehran from June 1-July 1 is expected to be approved as part of preparations for the 9th Pan-Arab Games — Al Hussein Tournament. Meanwhile, the Armenian delegation, which took part in the Tehran event has invited the national team for friendlies.

Samer Kamal to officiate at World Taekwondo Championship

AMMAN — The International Taekwondo Federation have chosen Jordan's international referee and head of the Arab Referees Committee Samer Kamal to be one of the referees to officiate the 14th World Taekwondo Championship, to be held in Canada from June 2-6. Kamal said his participation in the event, in which 70 countries and more than 400 players are taking part, comes two months ahead of the 9th Pan-Arab Games, adding that he expected to gain more experience and exposure to high-level competition at the event.

SCOREBOARD

Asia Cup Winners Cup

Final
Al Ittihad (S. Arabia) 3 C. Dragons (S. Korea) 2
3rd place play-off
K. Antlers (Japan) 1 Al Talaba (Iraq) 0

NBA

Charlotte	90	Cleveland	82
Toronto	93	New York	90
Portland	102	Dallas	94
Utah	109	LA Lakers	93
Sacramento	119	Denver	97

French Cup draw for semi-finals

Nantes v Nimes (D2)
Sedan (D2) v Le Mans (D2)
Matches played April 27 and 28

French League Cup
Lens 2 Sochaux 0 AET
Final on May 8 at Stade de France

Spanish League
Barcelona 2 Real Mallorca 1
Real Valladolid 1 Atletico Madrid 0

Italian League
Bologna 3 Fiorentina 0
Lazio 1 Juventus 3
Parma 1 Sampdoria 1

Belgian League
Gent 1 Ekeren 3
Charleroi 1 Mouscron 3
Alost 0 Beveren 1
Lokeren 1 Harelbeke 0
Lierse 0 Anderlecht 0
Standard Liege 2 St. Truiden 0

Dutch League
AZ Alkmaar 3 De Graafschap 3
FC Twente 0 C. Leeuwarden 0
M. Maastricht 1 Sparta Rotterdam 1
PSV Eindhoven 2 Nijmegen 0
Vitesse Arnhem 1 SC Heerenveen 2

GOREN BRIDGE

WITH OMAR SHARIF
A TARIK HUSSEIN
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FAMOUS HAND

East-West vulnerable. North deals
NORTH
♠ 6 3
♥ A 10 8 2
♦ A K
♣ A Q 10 9 3

WEST
♠ A K 10 5
♥ Q 9
♦ 8 7 6
♣ 8 7 4 2

EAST
♠ Q J 9
♥ 7 5 4
♦ Q J 10 4 3 2
♣ A 5

SOUTH
♠ 8 7 4 2
♥ K J 6 3
♦ 9 5
♣ K J 6

The bidding:
NORTH EAST SOUTH WEST
1♠ Pass 1♥ Pass
2♠ Pass 2♥ Pass
3♠ Pass 3♥ Pass
4♠ Pass 4♥ Pass

Opening lead: King of ♠

In the 1960s, Terence Reese-Boris Schapiro and Pietro Forquet-Boris Schapiro were generally considered to be the best pairs in the world. On this deal from the 1964 World Team Olympiad, they found themselves opposing each other in the qualifying

rounds
Garozzo's one club opening bid was strong and forcing, and Forquet's one-heart response showed two suits, counting a king as one honour, and an ace as two. Thereafter, the auction was natural and the 6 and four-heart contract was reached.

In the other room the British North-South pair made four hearts after the Italians cashed two spades and switched to a diamond. The very graph audience and commentators were forecasting a tie board, but the defenders had other ideas.

Reese led the king of trumps and Schapiro dropped the queen. Showing the jack, Reese obediently continued with a spade to the jack and a spade return forced dummy to ruff. The ace of hearts was cashed and, when West followed with the nine, declarer elected to protect against a 4-1 trump break by running the ten. To add the queen, Reese played his remaining spade, forcing the table to ruff again and allowing East to discard his singleton club.

Declay was trapped on the table. The only way to return to hand to draw the last trump was with a club, but East ruffed for the setting trick.

Cinema Theatre Cinema Theatre Cinema Theatre Cinema Theatre Cinema Theatre Cinema Theatre						
CINEMA TEL:463-4144 PHILADELPHIA '1' Steven Spielberg's ANTZ Shows: 12:30, 3:30, 6:15, 8:15 SAVING PRIVATE RYAN Show: 9:30	CINEMA TEL:463-4144 PHILADELPHIA '2' Sophie Marceau ... in Leo Tolstoy's ANNA KARENINA Shows: 12:30, 3:30, 6:15, 8:30, 10:30	CINEMA TEL:5699238 PLAZA Leonardo Di Caprio ... in TITANIC Shows: 12:15, 3:30, 6:45, 9:45	CINEMA TEL:5677420 CONCORDE ALWAD MAHROUS BTA' AL WAZIR Shows: 12:30, 3:30, 6:15, 8:30, 10:30 CONCORDE 2 DISCLOSURE	CINEMA TEL:5934793 GALLERIA 1 ABDOUN www.cns.com.jo/Galleria Julia Roberts ... in STEPMOM Shows: 3:30, 6:15, 8:30, 10:45 THE MAGIC SWORD Thursday and Friday mornings	CINEMA TEL:5934793 GALLERIA 2 ABDOUN www.cns.com.jo/Galleria Tom Hanks & Meg Ryan ... in YOU'VE GOT M@IL Shows: 3:30, 6:15, 8:30, 10:45 RUSH HOUR Shows: 5:00 p.m. only	Hisham Yarnes Theatre TEL: 4625155 The political satire AL SALAM AL Starting at 8:30 p.m.

Listings for films and showing times as received by cinemas and their advertising agencies.

Barak calls on Deri to quit Israeli politics

Labour chief rules out coalition talks with Shas leader

TEL AVIV (AFP) — Labour Party chief Ehud Barak took a political gamble Sunday by publicly calling on Arie Deri, the influential head of the ultra-Orthodox Shas Party, to quit politics after his conviction for corruption last week.

Barak insisted that he would not negotiate with Deri over the entry of Shas into a coalition government if he wins elections for the premiership this summer.

Barak's two main rivals, incumbent Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and centrist former Defence Minister Yitzhak Mordechai, have both refused to rule out future cooperation with Deri, whose party is the third largest in the outgoing parliament.

"I will not negotiate with Deri about forming a coalition," Barak told Israel Radio, adding that he expected Deri to step down voluntarily as head of Shas after the May 17 general elections.

Barak did not rule out negotiating a coalition with the Shas Party after Deri's departure from politics.

"I am convinced that Deri will step down after the elections, but we must remember that Shas is a legitimate and important movement that represents a large sector of Israeli society," he added.

Israeli President Ezer Weizman, who is known for his sharp tongue, told Israel Radio that "Deri will not be able to be a part of the Israeli government."

Barak too initially hesitated to break with Deri after the politician was sentenced on Thursday to four years in jail on charges of bribe-taking, fraud and breach of trust when he was a government minister in the late 1980s.

All three candidates fear that a denunciation of Deri, who is revered by Shas' Sephardic constituency, would alienate Shas voters and doom their chances for election.

Deri has been one of the key power brokers in Israeli politics for more than 15 years, trading Shas electoral support for key cabinet posts in governments of the left and right.

The willingness of Barak,

Netanyahu and Mordechai to continue giving Deri such a role even as a convicted felon had been strongly denounced both by lower level politicians and Israel's attorney general, Elyakim Rubinstein, who called their stance the "silence of the lambs."

Barak came under particularly strong pressure over the weekend from senior Labour Party figures to change his position.

Barak began wavering on Friday when he said that if he "were in Deri's position, I would resign."

But it was not until Sunday that Barak declared he would not negotiate with a Shas led by Deri and called outright for the ultra-Orthodox strongman to quit politics.

Deri's four-year jail sentence was suspended pending an appeal to the supreme court which is expected to last for months.

Shas has categorically rejected calls he be replaced as party leader and has vowed he will head the movement even from jail.



LEAVING HOME: A lone tractor carrying ethnic Albanian refugees makes its way towards Kukes from the Morini border crossing on Sunday. The influx of ethnic Albanian refugees into Albania came to a virtual halt Sunday afternoon, after over 5,000 had crossed earlier in the day (AP photo)

Netanyahu says Arafat 'meddling' in polls

TEL AVIV (AFP) — Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu accused Palestinian President Yasser Arafat on Sunday of trying to influence Arab Israelis' stance in elections next month, calling the meddling "explosive."

"I can confirm that Arafat is very much involved in the Israeli election campaign, and I agree with the head of the army intelligence who defined the involvement as explosive," Netanyahu was quoted by the Irtim news service as telling a cabinet meeting.

Netanyahu's spokesmen were not available to comment on the reported remarks.

At the cabinet session, several ministers asked the head of the army intelligence service, Major General Amos Malka, to give details of Arafat's involvement in the campaign for elections to be held on May 17.

The officer refused, saying the information was classified, Irtim reported.

Netanyahu answered the ministers' question by making it clear he was not happy with what he had heard from Malka, but he did not elaborate.

Rightist Israeli politicians have been charging for weeks that Arafat and other officials in the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) were trying to

ensure that Israel's million-strong Arab minority backs opposition Labour Party leader Ehud Barak in his bid to unseat Netanyahu as prime minister.

Netanyahu has reportedly told associates that Arafat sought unsuccessfully to discourage an outgoing Arab member of parliament, Azmi Bishara, from running for prime minister because he feared his candidacy would draw Arab votes from Barak.

The PNA has denied any meddling in the elections. Israeli right-wingers present Arafat's alleged meddling in Arab Israeli affairs as evidence that his declared aim of creating

an independent state in the West Bank and Gaza Strip is only an interim goal.

They charge the PLO leader's ultimate aim is to fight for the return of up to three million Palestinians to homes both in the occupied territories and in Israel proper and then overwhelm the Jewish state.

Arab Israelis are Palestinians who refused to flee their homes when the Jewish state was created in 1948 and were granted Israeli nationality.

They make up about 18 per cent of Israel's population of six million and account for an estimated 15 per cent of the electorate.

Barak unsettles Netanyahu with television debate plan

TEL AVIV (AFP) — Israeli Labour Party leader Ehud Barak forced Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on the defensive Sunday with a plan for the two men to face off in three television debates as part of the official campaign for May elections.

Netanyahu, widely considered the premier television performer on the Israeli political scene, is paradoxically opposed to the plan because it would eat into the limited television and radio broadcast time allotted to his shrinking Likud bloc for the campaign.

"We have suggested three television debates between Barak and Netanyahu on April 27, 28 and 29, to be counted as part of the campaign broadcast times allotted to their parties," Avraham Burg, a Labour Party campaign official, said Sunday.

Burg said he had received only an "evasive" response from Likud officials over the idea, which must be finalised before a Monday deadline for setting the programme for radio

and television campaign advertising.

Labour issued its proposal after Barak refused to participate in a television debate between Netanyahu and the third main candidate for premier, Centre Party leader Yitzhak Mordechai, which was organised last week by a political talk show host.

Barak justified his refusal by saying such debates should be organised by recognised campaign officials and not television personalities.

Netanyahu tried to win campaign points by claiming Barak "ran away" from the debate and repeatedly referred to his absent rival during the 90-minute confrontation with Mordechai.

But the show quickly turned against the Likud leader as Mordechai, his former defence minister, assailed Netanyahu's credibility with tales of deceit and lies during the more than two years they governed together.

Following that setback for

Netanyahu, Barak pressed ahead with his own debate plan.

While Netanyahu is normally a fervent advocate of television debates — most observers consider him a superior television performer to the stern Barak — the Labour plan poses a serious quandary for Likud.

Under Israeli election rules, each party's official campaign broadcast time is determined by the number of its deputies in the outgoing parliament.

Following a wave of defections by senior Likud figures, the Netanyahu camp counts only 22 deputies, worth 70 minutes of air time.

Barak, meanwhile, has formed an election alliance. One Israel, grouping Labour with the centrist Geshet Party of former Foreign Minister David Levy, who was previously allied to Likud and bought four outgoing deputies to the list.

One Israel can count 37 former deputies, worth 120 minutes of air time.

Palestinian lawmaker urges reform of courts

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM

(R) — The Palestinian National Authority must act to save freedoms endangered by powerful military courts and deadly abuse of weapons in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, a key lawmaker said on Sunday.

Human rights organisations have called for the abolition of state security courts, which exercise sweeping powers. The security courts have been criticised for over-zealous use of the death penalty, and of trying cases of a civilian nature.

On Sunday, the chairman of the legal committee of the Palestinian Legislative Council, Abdul Karim Abu Saleh, told Reuters that freedoms would remain restricted unless the judicial system were reformed, respected and freed of manipulation by the executive branch.

"Until now, the revolutionary legitimacy has ruled, and the presence of state security courts is a real danger to the freedoms of our people," Abu Saleh

added.

He said that a draft law, aimed at strengthening the court system and the rule of law, remains unfinished three months after the council submitted it to Palestinian President Arafat.

In the absence of a constitution, the legal system in the West Bank relies largely on old Turkish, British, and Jordanian laws. Laws in the Gaza Strip are modelled on those of Egypt.

The PNA has come under frequent fire by rights groups for allowing its security forces to detain suspect without charges.

The PNA has passed a law restricting arms to security forces and in December carried out a campaign to collect illegal weapons. But excesses have continued, rights activists said.

The Palestinian rights group Law said 20 people have been killed in disputes involving the abuse of arms by security forces and civilians since Palestinian self-rule began in 1994.

Egypt sentences 9 militants to death

HUCKSTEP (AFP) — Nine Egyptian followers of fugitive Saudi Islamist Osama Ben Laden were sentenced on Sunday to hang for plotting attacks on targets in Egypt, but all were still at large.

The military court here also condemned 78 militants to prison terms, including 11 sentenced to hard labour for life, for belonging to the Islamic Jihad, one of Egypt's leading armed militant groups.

Twenty were acquitted. Only 36 of those given jail terms were in Egyptian custody, including three condemned to hard labour for life after they were handed over from Albania and Azerbaijan.

The verdicts cap a watershed case which helped authorities deliver a heavy blow to Jihad operations in Egypt, understand for the first time how the group was set up overseas and arrest members infiltrating from abroad.

But Egyptian officials say the movement can still pose a long-term threat as its leader and many other militants still operate from their main overseas base in Afghanistan.

Jihad, which surged to attention when it assassinated

Egyptian President Anwar Sadat in 1981, vowed to continue its "holy war until victory or martyrdom," according to a statement faxed here claiming to represent the group.

The defendants who watched the trial from a cage called for "a revolution against America and Zionism" after hearing the sentences from the judge, who denounced them as "evil and subversive men who hid behind Islam."

The sentences were lighter than expected, however. Twenty-five of the 35 who risked the death penalty were given jail terms and one was acquitted.

Among those sentenced to death was Ayman Al Zawahiri, the head of the Jihad who became Ben Laden's lieutenant and is believed to be with him in Afghanistan. His brother Mohammad was also given the death penalty.

The nine Jihad leaders sentenced to death were convicted of trying to revive the group by training people abroad to use explosives to kill and terrify innocent people.

The trial of the 107 began at the court in Huckstep, north of Cairo, in February.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Israeli fire wounds Lebanese man

NABATIYEH (AP) — A maimed Lebanese civilian was injured in Israeli bombardment of south Lebanon Sunday after a guerrilla attack on an Israeli-controlled enclave. Lebanese security officials said, Jawad Mohammed Musa's injury was the only one reported in the morning's battles. Musa, 35, whose left leg was amputated below the knee from a shrapnel injury in a similar Israeli bombardment two years ago, suffered a fresh shrapnel wound in the upper part of that leg early Sunday, the officials added. He was treated at a hospital. The Israeli shelling followed an attack by Shiite Muslim Hizbollah guerrillas on the village of Sweida in the border enclave Israel occupies in south Lebanon. The officials said Hizbollah guerrillas used rocket-propelled grenades, mortars and automatic weapons in their morning attack on Sweida, about three kilometres north of Nabatiyeh, a southern market town.

Arafat arrives in Dakar

DAKAR (AFP) — Palestinian President Yasser Arafat arrived in the Senegalese capital at the weekend as part of a world tour to garner support for his plans to declare a Palestinian state on May 4. He was welcomed on his arrival Saturday night by Senegalese Interior Minister General Lamine Cisse. Later Sunday he was due to meet President Abdou Diouf, official radio said. In Nouakchott on Saturday, Arafat recalled that the transitional period in the territories will run out on May 4 under the Oslo agreements signed five years ago in the United States. "It is our right to proclaim on that date the birth of our independent state with Jerusalem as its capital," Arafat said after being welcomed by Mauritanian President Maouiya Wuld Taya.

33 Kurdish rebels killed

ANKARA (AFP) — Thirty-three rebels of the Kurdistan Labour Party (PKK) were killed in fighting with Turkish soldiers in the past two days in southeastern Turkey and in northern Iraq, the Anatolia news agency reported on Sunday. Fifteen of the rebels were killed in an ongoing Turkish army operation in northern Iraq which began two weeks ago with backing from fighter jets and helicopters. The latest killings brought the overall death toll of the incursion to 59, the agency said. In a military bulletin published last week, the general staff had said 44 Kurdish rebels and 10 Turkish soldiers were killed in the operation which is being supported by fighters of the Iraqi Kurdish leader Massoud Barzani's Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP). Anatolia also said 18 PKK rebels were killed in clashes with Turkish security forces in Turkey's mainly Kurdish-populated southeastern region.

Iranian journalists appeal for protection

TEHRAN (AFP) — Over 320 Iranian journalists have called on President Mohammad Khatami to guarantee their legal rights and stop newspaper bans. "We ask that journalism be recognised as a distinct profession and be afforded all legal services and support," the journalists said in a letter to Khatami published by the official IRNA news agency. The journalists called for an immediate end to "illogical and illegal" ways of dealing with the press and asked Khatami to define press violations clearly and without ambiguity. They claimed that in the past year eight newspapers and weeklies had been closed on various "empty pretexts" and said another two publications were on the verge of being shut down.

Khatami calls for Gulf cooperation

TEHRAN (AFP) — Iranian President Mohammad Khatami called Sunday for region wide cooperation to ensure the Gulf's security and stability, the official IRNA news agency said. Khatami made the appeal in talks with Yemeni Foreign Minister Abdul Qader Bajamal, who has been visiting Iran since Saturday. "There's no solution other than collective cooperation by the countries in the region to ensure the Persian Gulf's security and stability. Divergences should not be allowed to turn into real differences," he said.



British dancers' 'pear-shaped' bodies under fire

LONDON (R) — One of Britain's top ballet groups will tour abroad with a cast of foreign-born ballerinas for their "pear-shaped" physiques, the Sunday Times reported. It said the English National Ballet had also snubbed native made dancers, saying they were too effete. Derek Deane, artistic director of the English National Ballet, blamed the problem on poor eating habits. "Why are we not producing British talent to stand alongside the greats like Margot Fonteyn? The shape of the British body is to blame," a quoted him as saying.

Protesters don't want Olympic volleyball on beach

SYDNEY (AP) — A resident of Sydney's Bondi beach vowed to lie in the path of bulldozers in a bid to stop the Olympic volleyball competition from being on the popular beach strip next year. Bondi Olympic Watch (BOW) spokesman Peter Winkler said Sunday that the action group would protest against the event up to and during the 2000 games and that he was prepared to "lie down in front of bulldozers" to stop it. About 1,000 residents opposed to the volleyball event at Bondi attended a fiery public meeting Sunday in which a spokesman from the Olympic Coordination Authority (OCA) was heckled and verbally abused.

'Wag the Dog' wins Belgrade film academy prize

BELGRADE (AFP) — The U.S. movie "Wag the Dog," whose plot has become a tragic reality for people in Yugoslavia, has received the top award from the Belgrade-based Academy of Film Arts and Science. The Tanning state news agency reported Sunday. After awarding the film its major prize, the Crystal Prism, on Friday, the academy, the top movie institution in Yugoslavia, sent a letter to the film's director Barry Levinson and actors Dustin Hoffman and Robert De Niro.

Runners plan marathon marriage

LONDON (R) — Two British runners plan to get married during the London marathon and then finish the race as man and wife. Mike Gambrell and Barbara Cole have competed in 100 marathons, got engaged during the Disney marathon in Florida and thought the London race would make the ideal setting to tie the knot. "We spend most of our lives running marathons and thought it would be just perfect to get married during one. We are absolutely thrilled to bits," Cole said. They plan to break off just after the start of the race to exchange vows at a Jacobean mansion on the route. "Hopefully we'll get time to grab a glass of bubbly along the way," Gambrell said.

New way to budge chubby kids from television

WASHINGTON (AP) — Parents may have a way to budge their TV-watching kids from the family sofa: a bicycle hooked up electrically to the set. To see their favorite shows, couch potatoes have to pedal. An obesity researcher who came up with the "TVcycle" says early trials helped youngsters shed fat and discouraged TV viewing. David Allison of St Luke's-Roosevelt Hospital in New York delivered the TVcycles to six overweight TV fans, ages 8 to 12, and put standard exercise bikes in front of televisions for four similar children. Nobody nagged the youngsters to pedal or lose weight, Allison said. "We just said, here you go. For the TV to work, you have to pedal. See ya," he said.

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